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**History-making in an unequal present:  
Three perspectives on migration  
pasts in the North East of England**

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PhD

2019

**History-making in an unequal present:  
Three perspectives on migration  
pasts in the North East of England**

Leonie Wieser

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the requirements of the University of  
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## **Abstract**

*This thesis investigates how knowledge about the past matters for specific actors in the present, as well as for wider society. It examines the motivations and positioning of academic, museum and bottom-up knowledge-makers to consider how their perspectives add to our understanding of the past, as well as the functions of histories in a structurally unequal society. In the academic literature, the knowledge-claims of bottom-up perspectives, and the positioning of this knowledge as of public concern, have not been investigated thoroughly, nor have the specific effects in the present of these different practices of knowledge-making about the past been fully examined. A comparative approach to knowledge-making in academic, museum and bottom-up settings elucidates how knowledge and power interact in an unequal present. To answer these questions, this thesis has identified examples of each perspective, using the case study of migration to the North East of England. It employs a critical qualitative methodology including interviews, participant observation and text analysis of knowledge-makers and their products in all three fields. This thesis found that while the academic perspective presented its knowledge-making as more detached than the other two perspectives, all three approaches considered knowledge about the past as having use in the present, either intellectually or practically. It further found that varying conceptions of what issues counted as important to wider society, and thus public, had potentially negative effects in terms of people's access to the public sphere. The histories produced by all three perspectives, and their practices, were found to have wider implications. Especially the bottom-up perspective aimed to transform wider structures of knowledge-making as well as the societal valorisation of specific pasts. These findings are important in understanding the practices of history-making as having specific – perpetuating or challenging — functions within wider societal structures of racism and inequality.*

## List of contents

Abstract .....	3
List of contents .....	4
1. INTRODUCTION – HISTORY-MAKING IN AN UNEQUAL PRESENT .....	8
1.1. Historical perspectives matter.....	8
1.2. Inequality matters .....	11
1.3. This dissertation.....	14
1.3.1. Research questions .....	17
1.3.2. Theoretical approach .....	17
1.3.3. Case study .....	18
1.3.4. Research methods and analysis .....	20
1.3.5. Ethics, limitations, challenges .....	22
1.4. Self-reflection .....	23
1.5. Definitions .....	24
1.6. Structure of thesis.....	25
2. PERSPECTIVES ON KNOWLEDGE-MAKING ABOUT THE PAST.....	28
Introduction .....	28
2.1. Historical perspectives.....	29
2.2. Migration and minority groups in History .....	38
2.3. Museum perspectives.....	42
2.4. Migration in museums.....	47
2.5. Heritage and bottom-up perspectives.....	51
2.6. Marginalised and racialised groups in heritage .....	59
Summary .....	62
3. ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION AND MINORITY GROUPS IN THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND.....	65
Introduction .....	65
3.1. Context: Historical narratives of migrant and racialised minority groups in Britain .....	66
3.2. The motivations of academic historians.....	68
3.3. Case study: academic histories of migration to Tyneside .....	72
3.4. Making academic knowledge.....	76
3.5. Positioning academic knowledge in the public sphere .....	85
3.6. Effects of knowledge about migrants' and minorities' pasts on present society .....	86
Summary .....	92
4. THE MUSEUM PERSPECTIVE ON MIGRATION TO TYNESIDE .....	94
Introduction .....	94
4.1. Context: Museum representations of migration .....	94
4.2. Museum motivations.....	97
4.3. Case study: The <i>Destination Tyneside</i> gallery .....	100
4.4. Making knowledge in the exhibition .....	104
4.5. Positioning knowledge about the past as public .....	109
4.6. Effects of the exhibition on the present .....	114
Summary .....	118
5. BOTTOM-UP PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S MIGRATION TO THE NORTH EAST .....	120
Introduction .....	120

5.1. Context: Resistant self-representation.....	121
5.2. Project motivations .....	123
5.3. Case study: BAM! Sistahood! .....	126
5.4. Making bottom-up knowledge of women's migration.....	129
5.5. Positioning knowledge about the past as public.....	139
5.6. Effects of knowledge-making in the present.....	143
Summary .....	147
6. MAKING HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE PUBLIC IN THE PRESENT .....	149
Introduction .....	149
6.1. Positioning the knower.....	149
6.2. Making historical knowledge: using sources and filling gaps .....	153
6.3. Issues of common concern.....	158
6.4. History-making, structural inequality and change .....	161
Summary .....	166
7. CONCLUSION .....	168
7.1. Analysing three perspectives on knowledge-making.....	168
7.2. Original contribution to knowledge .....	171
7.3. Implications for practice .....	173
7.4. Avenues for future research .....	176
Appendix A. Sample questionnaires .....	178
Questions for Museums professionals.....	178
Questions for Academics.....	179
Questions for BAM! Sistahood project participants and volunteers.....	180
Questions for BAM! Sistahood coordinators.....	181
Appendix B. Information sheet and consent form .....	182
List of References .....	185
Published works.....	185
Reports and Newsletters .....	203
Websites .....	205
Newspaper articles .....	206
Television.....	206
Films .....	206
Exhibitions .....	206
Unpublished sources .....	206
List of interviewees .....	207

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## **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Department Ethics Committee on 01/09/2015.

I declare that the word count of this thesis is 77,915 words.

Name: Leonie Wieser

Signature:

Date: 27 September 2019



# 1. INTRODUCTION – HISTORY-MAKING IN AN UNEQUAL PRESENT

Knowledge about the past plays an active role in the power relations of present society. Accepted patterns of historical knowledge legitimise and enact social hierarchies and structures of power, but new knowledge and new knowers can play a disruptive role in these formations. Debates concerning the particular value of academic historical perspectives and how they differ from popular, that is non-academics', everyday relations with the past should be understood in this context. Some seek to identify the specific ways in which historical thinking and knowledge produced by academics has critical effects upon the present, arguing for its distinct intellectual and political potential. There is, however, a legitimate worry about the elitism of some of these efforts. Academics, it is objected, are not the only actors to hold knowledge about the past and make this meaningful in the present. In this way, academic discussion on societal history-making is characterised by tensions between elitist on the one hand and democratising efforts on the other. With the knowledge produced not neutral, there is a need to understand it in its social context, while at the same time being clear about the specific ideas that are produced: the content of this knowledge. An investigation of knowledge-making, and specifically knowledge-making about the past, matters for a deeper understanding of the society in which we live and how power operates within it. Historical knowledge specifically is investigated here in relation to its function within social power relations.

## 1.1. Historical perspectives matter

John Tosh's *Why History Matters*, published in 2008, compellingly argues that historical thinking is essential for citizens in a representative democracy. For example, Tosh contends that the British invasion of what was then called Mesopotamia in 1914, should have featured in public debates about the British invasion of Iraq in 2002 – potentially making politicians and the public more cautious about the prospect of being able to withdraw from an invaded country and leave it in a stable condition. The online platform *History & Policy* also offers this type of historical perspective on present issues. For example, in the case of Brexit, it traces the roots of the English and European legal systems to a common tradition (Herzog, 2018), and examines the difficult history of policing the Irish border (Smith, 2016). *History & Policy* has also examined issues such as poverty and government (in)action in the United Kingdom by comparing levels of deprivation in 2018 England with poverty and responses to it one hundred years earlier

(Thane, 2018). *The History Manifesto* articulates the value of long-term historical perspectives on the present, as these can contextualise such present problems as inequality and climate change (Guldi and Armitage, 2014). The French historian François Hartog (2015) argues that historical thinking provides distanced and long-term perspectives on the present which enhance appreciation of the present condition as having been shaped through past human actions and decisions, and thus are changeable rather than natural.

While these works give very good reasons for valuing historically informed perspectives on the present, they also differentiate between those that are critically useful – history – and those that are not – heritage (Tosh, 2008; 2014; Hartog, 2015). Their distinctions between their own approach and what they consider more popular approaches have elitist implications. Tosh specifically contrasts his critical public history with what he sees as public disregard for critical perspectives, warning against what he calls ‘identity history’ and heritage. While Tosh states that ‘No one who cares about a more equitable society can regret the part that history has played in increasing the pride and confidence of previously marginalised groups.’ (2008, p. 14), he continues ‘But identity history has done little to foster a critical public history.’ (ibid., p. 14). This statement, at the same time as stating his commitment to equality, establishes hierarchies in knowledge about the past of that, which is useful and that, which is not, claiming that history is universal while heritage is about the particular and personal (ibid.). Other historians have criticised public uses of the past as only providing answers and assertions, rather than asking questions (Black, 2010). David Lowenthal, for instance, proclaims that ‘History tells all who will listen what has happened and how things came to be as they are. Heritage passes on exclusive myths of origin and continuance, endowing a select group with prestige and common purpose. ... History is for all, heritage is for ourselves alone’ (Lowenthal, 1996, p. 128). Moreover, Tosh states that ‘heritage and identity history address a cultural and emotional desire to belong’ – which he does not consider as public issues (2008, p. 24). It is thus a very specific ‘history’ that matters here, one that clearly differentiates between issues of public concern (policy, for example) and personal concerns (culture and belonging). In efforts to critique and de-naturalise the present, these historians at the same time remain uncritical about their own situation within historically shaped and exclusionary knowledge traditions. History-making itself, here, is not historicised.

Other scholars have expanded the notion of whose knowledge is valuable for the present. Elizabeth Pente *et al* argue that there is something undemocratic in Tosh’s approach, which considers historical thinking the prerogative of the academic historian (2015, p. 40). Raphael Samuel criticises the ‘hierarchical view of the constitution of knowledge’ in academic history (1994, p. 5). Rather than relations with the past being the domain of academics, these heritage scholars and public historians consider the making of

knowledge about the past and its relation with the present by ordinary people as legitimate and consider non-academics as having expertise to offer to knowledge-making about the past (Thelen and Rosenzweig, 1998; Samuel, 1994; Smith, 2006; Kean and Ashton, 2009). Pente *et al*, for example, argue that non-academics contribute deeper historical understanding of national identity through lived experience, emotional engagement and their own views on self-identities (2015). Thelen sees lay people's expertise as offering to historical knowledge 'skills of empathy and imagination, dreams and hopes' (2000, p. 43). Hilda Kean and Paul Ashton call for 'greater appreciation of the many ways in which the past is validated in people's daily lives' (2009, p. 4). Raphael Samuel's work identifies the various practices through which non-academics create knowledge about the relationship between the past and the present, for example in stories, songs or place names (1994). In these perspectives, popular connections to the past are deemed to offer valuable knowledge, that might differ from academic history.

Laurajane Smith writes about heritage as a social and cultural process by which people create links with the past, but also connections with the future, for example in the way Waanji women in Australia enact their memories, practices and values at meaningful places and pass these on to younger generations at the same time as creating new meanings and values (2006, p. 47f). The past thus does not only matter in specific factual and self-contained knowledge, but also in people's everyday lives, experiences and practices. These personal and shared ways of making knowledge through 'heritage' is considered by these scholars as contributing critical perspectives to our understanding of the past and the present. Importantly, Pente *et al* do not see belonging and identity as only private, but connected to larger national issues and histories (2015), while Smith also emphasises the broader societal context in which heritage and identity is acted out and performed (2006). Indeed, denoting certain matters as private or personal, rather than public, has been argued by Susan Okin (1991) to be a tool in the consolidation of present hierarchies of power. The widening of the actors and groups involved in historical knowledge-making could therefore challenge established hierarchies that devalue their expertise. It is thus important to ask not only about the specifics of knowledge created, but also who makes this knowledge and how it is understood to contribute to public debate, as well as the role institutions play in facilitating, supporting and authorising this knowledge. Clarity on this is needed in order to understand history's function in the present and to ensure that its effects are in line with the values ostensibly embraced by many academic and public historians – the creation of a critical public and a more equal and more just society.

## 1.2. Inequality matters

While historical knowledge-making matters for a critical understanding of the past and the present, the content of this knowledge is strongly informed by its background conditions. Historical perspectives, for example, can indeed offer understanding of social inequalities, as *The History Manifesto* claims (Guldi and Armitage, 2014), while history-making can also act to mask real continuing inequality, for example, by celebrating diverse cultures' contributions to a multicultural society, while leaving unquestioned their unequal social and economic status (Littler, 2008; Hall, 2005; Myers, 2006).

The content of histories – what we know about the past – has by some scholars been specifically analysed as directly implicated in the way society is stratified. Smith calls for investigation into the way power operates within representations and discourses about what pasts are valuable for the present (2006; 2012). She proposes that while many individuals and groups contest public authorised representations of the past (2006), expert and elite institutions, actors and interests nevertheless wield considerable power in creating these public understandings. Hierarchies of knowledge-making have been argued to be fundamentally linked to social positioning and oppression (Collins, 1991; Young, 2000). Power thus has a significant impact on how knowledge about the past is made, who has a role in shaping this knowledge, and what is accepted as legitimate historical knowledge. Power operates across sites and agents of knowledge-making in society, including academia and education as well as popular culture and museums, marginalising non-expert or minority perspectives in terms of topics, creators and audiences.

Inequality pervades institutions of knowledge production. University and museum workforces, especially at senior levels, remain vastly unrepresentative of wider society. A recent investigation into ethnicity and equality in the discipline of history at academic institutions showed that 93.7% of academic staff in History were from White backgrounds, and only 0.5% Black, 2.2% Asian and 1.6% Mixed (Atkinson *et al.*, 2018). The Museums Association reported that in 2006, 10.9% of museum staff nationally were Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (Shaw, 2013, p. 5), with permanent BAME<sup>1</sup> staff at Arts Council England funded museums at 5% in 2017/2018 (Arts Council England 2019, p. 18), as compared with 16% BME proportion across the country's working-age population (Arts

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<sup>1</sup> The term BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) and BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) is used in official and policy language to denote those parts of the population who are 'racialised' in UK society – those whose ethnicity is marked as different from the more powerful majority. In this thesis, I use these terms as reflective of the language chosen by the sources I employ – therefore BME or BAME for sources using official language, and, for example, 'Black' or 'Black and minority', when discussing specific groups' or individuals' self-definitions.

Council England, 2019). Importantly, under-representation varies by job type. Only 1.3% of senior managers were BAME (Shaw, 2013, p.5) and 5% of Arts Council funded museums' managers were BAME, with Boards in Arts Council funded Museums at 3% BAME (Arts Council England, 2019, p.38). Specialist roles, which include content roles (curation and collections), also had a particularly low percentage of BME staff, with 3% in 2017/18 (Arts Council England, 2019, p. 25). In universities, staff and students of ethnic minority backgrounds reported significant levels of discrimination, bias and harassment in their work environment (Atkinson *et al*, 2018, p. 8), and museum staff too highlighted the continuing challenge of day-to-day work life (Museums Association, 2016, p. 14).

With academic knowledge production dependent on debate and contestation (Arnold, 2000), the exclusive nature of these institutions impacts on their culture and the intellectual exchange that happens within them, and thus the content produced. The Royal Historical Society report's advice on how to attract more journal submissions by BME historians is cautious on the link between researcher identity and content: 'While BME historians do not only research and write about subjects connected to their heritage, and being mindful not to reinforce this pernicious stereotype, broadening a journal's content can be beneficial.' (Atkinson, et al., 2018, p. 92). While Tony Kushner too cautions against 'essentialist arguments that only those from such backgrounds can understand, and then write about, their own history' (Kushner, 2018, p. 2), he also remarks on the 'ethical underpinnings' of academic work on migration and minority groups' histories (2018, p. 4). This comment highlights the importance of scholars' commitments, while also cautioning against essentialism. The impact of more diverse staff on the contents of museums was seen by Museums Association research as especially important in terms of offering different perspectives on existing collections, as well as on new collections (Shaw, 2013, p. 6). Museum Detox, a network of museum workers, goes further and challenges the racist basis of many UK museum collections and representations (Museum Detox, 2019). The RHS report recommends the widening of the taught curriculum 'to challenge the racial foundations of the discipline and to reflect the full diversity of human histories' (Atkinson *et al*, 2018, p. 10), the integration, rather than segregation, of the history of race and ethnicity in the curriculum, as well as the integration of global histories as 'core' modules (Atkinson *et al*, 2018, p. 82). The report also highlights that the histories of BME communities in the UK are seldom part of school and university curricula (Atkinson *et al*, 2018, p. 83). The way these histories are represented or not represented has been linked to both the lack of diverse audiences and students of history and heritage.

The Museums Association has recognised the need to widen engagement with groups underrepresented in visitor statistics, such as increasing low-income visitors, black and minority visitors, and adults with a limiting disability or illness (Museums Association, 2010, np; Museums Association, 2016, p. 7). A number of historians in UK institutions

voiced concern at the underrepresentation of black history students at all levels of academic education, including those training to be history teachers (Adi *et al.*, 2014). The RHS research findings show that black and minority students are vastly underrepresented in Historical and Philosophical Studies, starting at undergraduate study (Atkinson *et al.*, 2018).

Community groups and heritage from below movements fill some of the gaps left by official institutions to represent the knowledge about the past they identify as valuable. One of the main funding bodies of heritage in the UK, National Lottery Heritage Fund (formerly the Heritage Lottery Fund or HLF), provides funding for such projects. It presents an open definition of heritage, 'encouraging people to identify their own heritage and explain why it is valued by themselves and others' (HLF, 2012, p. 10). The largest component of funding however goes to buildings/monuments 37.5%, museums 28.5%, and natural heritage 20.9% (HLF, 2012, p. 5). Recipients of grants in the minor section of 'cultures and memory' (making up just over 5% of funding from 1994 to 2012; see HLF, 2012, p. 5) include young people at a Bristol radio station who recorded and celebrated the story of Caribbean culture in Britain by interviewing 'local music artists, cultural pioneers and community members' and creating radio shows, a film and a website (Dubplate to dubstep, 2013). Another group recorded experiences of women who formed the Greenham Common Peace Camp in the 1980s and 90s (Scary Little Girls, 2018). The HLF reports however show a disproportionately small amount of funding going to BAME-led heritage projects and stress the need to increase diversity in grant making (HLF, 2012, p. 10).

Universities and museums have discussed and questioned their own role within society for over 20 years. Both are increasingly encouraged to be more outward facing and socially inclusive. A Museums Association programme, for example, has the goal to strengthen communities and create a fairer society, as well as enrich individuals (2013, p. 2). Academics and museums have been encouraged to bring together traditional academic knowledge-making with projects involving communities in 'bottom up' history and heritage research, such as the Dig Where We Stand programme (Flinn and Sexton, 2013). In this part-AHRC part-Heritage Lottery funded programme, academics collaborated with community groups and facilitated their conservation, archiving or research projects, for example through skills training and by supporting their Heritage Lottery Fund applications. Some of this research aims to democratise knowledge production, and improve dialogue and exchange between academics and members of society who are traditionally excluded from knowledge-making. However, these exchanges happen within vastly unequal institutional and social frameworks (Sidney, 2018).

This inequality in staffing, content, audiences and funding of bottom up heritage is central to the discussion of the democratisation of historical knowledge-making. Institutional exclusion results in a lack of control and lack of participation in discussions about the past in the present. The institutions of public and academic history are part of those organisations that play a role in the maintenance of hierarchies within society. The concern with racial, ethnic, religious and gender identities – ‘identity politics’ – is sometimes viewed as a diversion from the pressing issues of environmental exploitation and material inequality (Anthony, Nov 2018). People’s identities within society, however, are linked to social structures and differentiation (Scott, 1999). People’s cultural, ethnic, gender and sexual identities are thus important factors in society and specifically issues of inequality. Some have more power than others, based on their particular social group (Young, 1990). It is thus not only formal constraints that impact on people’s control over their own lives. This thesis employs feminist political theories that specifically locate power in social relations (Young, 2000). Relations between social groups and how individuals from different social groups interact within society, are affected by hierarchies, and operate informally, rather than through formal regulations (Fraser, 2005). Historically shaped structures play a role in these relations (Nuti, 2019), which are at the same time an important basis for history-making itself.

Inequality is best understood intersectionally: ethnic and gender identities are structurally linked to class, with, for example, black and minority ethnic women disproportionately affected by austerity (Imkaan, 2018; Hall *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, the under-employment of Black and minority ethnic people in middle-class and – often well-paid – academic, as well as museum jobs, is very clearly not merely cultural, but of concrete material concern. The democratisation of historical knowledge-making must be situated within this exclusionary context.

### **1.3. This dissertation**

There is therefore a pressing need to investigate how, and within what settings, various actors contribute and advance knowledge about the past as a critical resource for a democratic society, as well as how this knowledge functions within this society. Clarity on how, where and by whom knowledge is created is especially vital in light of the growing distrust of expertise, facts and statistics (Davies, 2017; McLaren, 2011). In this context, how public institutions of historical knowledge like universities and museums position themselves and their expertise, as well as their limitations, is central. Understanding why ordinary people as well as professionals and academics are drawn to the past helps interrogate the nature of the knowledge produced and its effects. It further helps to analyse the value of this knowledge, and its impacts, for individuals, groups, as well as

wider society. A study of migration and minority histories and heritage illuminates how personal relations to specific pasts impact – or are seen to impact – on public representations. It is impossible to do this without taking into account how power operates within institutions and society in attempts to frame and reframe discourses about the past. Such power processes are situated within the legacy of centuries of racialisation (Littler, 2008), class and status inequalities (Fraser, 2005) and gender differentiation (Scott, 1999) in society.

While several historians have reported on their experiences and views on community-collaborations (Dresser, 2010; Shopes, 2002; Pente and Ward, 2018), detailed studies on how non-academic approaches differ from academic history have not been undertaken. What specific expertise academic research offers (Pihlainen, 2017), and how this is distinct from actual non-academic engagements has not been sufficiently explored, nor has academic knowledge been analysed as having effects in present society (Tozzi, 2018). These are however central questions, as the positioning of academic knowledge as less partial and its use and effects unquestionably critical and public (Tosh, 2008), can exclude other methods of knowledge-making.

The role of museums in authorising knowledge about the past and enabling ways of knowing has been analysed in depth (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Onciul, 2013; Gouriévidis, 2014). More diverse representations, as well as collaborations with marginalised groups, are here investigated as challenges to an established order (Kidd, 2014). While ‘recognition’ has been widely used as a concept to combat social and cultural exclusion, museums’ representations and institutions’ relations with marginalised groups have also been analysed as burdened by continuing power inequalities and institutional racism (Lynch and Alberti, 2010; Smith and Fouseki, 2011). Investigations into minority and migration representations in museums have further brought up important questions about the role of museums in shaping understandings of what pasts are of shared concern (Ang, 2019).

Heritage studies on the other hand offers detailed studies of people’s and institutions’ engagements and activities concerning the meaning and *value* certain pasts hold for them. The focus on present contestation and power has dethroned claims that the past can be understood from a detached objective point of view (Smith, 2006), which have been replaced by a privileging of subjectivity (Su, 2018). However, there has been little debate on how bottom-up perspectives conceptualise the status of the knowledge they produce, especially whether they consider it as contributing wider knowledge beyond subjective and relative meaning. How the subjectivity explored in heritage studies relates to relativism – i.e. if one version of the past is as good as another (Friedlander, 1992) – is thus a fundamental question.



This thesis examines the processes and effects of knowledge-making about the past in a diverse and unequal society. It interrogates the interplay between facts and value in knowledge-making and seeks to democratise negotiations of public importance in relations to the past. By focusing on how research into neglected histories makes claims about what content matters about the past and for whom this content matters, it develops an understanding of history-making as a practice situated within unequal social relations as well as contributing to these.

The thesis offers a unique critical enquiry that analyses and compares actual practices in history and heritage in order to build an understanding of the public and personal narratives that contribute to the shaping of historical knowledge. Applying the same level of analysis to all makers of history and heritage is central to understanding the knowledge each adds about the past. Three perspectives on history-making are examined in this dissertation: 'academic', 'museum' and 'bottom-up'. The academic perspective researched here is the scholarly field of academic history, based on established disciplinary theories and methods of engagement with the past. The museum perspective is the field of public knowledge-making within the museum as a social institution. The bottom-up perspective is located within a group, where participants have particular interests and connections to the past they explore. Each field has particular ideas about how the past matters in the present, and whether this signification has particular and specific meaning to individuals, groups, the general public, or if its meaning aspires to be universal. Each favours different ways of creating knowledge, whether it is through material remains, documentary research and evidence, testimonial sources, lived experience and learnt skills and traditions.

By critically investigating motivations, processes and effects within these three perspectives, this research increases the breadth and raises the quality of our research into the importance of the past in the present. It further interrogates how inequality in the different fields of knowledge-making is produced and reproduced as well as challenged. This also contributes greater understanding as the ground for further collaborations, dialogue and exchanges between these fields, thus promoting debate and furthering knowledge-making about the past in our society.

This thesis examines these issues through a case study approach. It researches minority heritage and history-making in Tyneside in the North East of England, and critically engages with knowledge produced inside and outside of official institutions. It investigates three perspectives to give a sense of the range of fields that create knowledge about and valorise aspects of the past, exploring similarities and differences between them. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines history and heritage theory with the qualitative research methods employed in heritage and museums research in order to

enhance understanding of the diverse ways the past interacts with the present and of how power relations shape these interactions.

### **1.3.1. Research questions**

In order to fulfil these aims, this dissertation explores two main research questions:

1. How and for whom do the three perspectives, academic historians, museums, and bottom up organisations, produce knowledge about the past?
2. How does each perspective on knowledge-making challenge or reproduce social inequalities?

To answer these research questions, diverse ways of making history and heritage are investigated in order to understand more fully the role and value of the past for these agents in the present. The dissertation examines differences as well as similarities in their approaches and analyses how personal and political relations shape present representations. It asks how academic historians, museums, and bottom-up organisations conceive of the status of the knowledge they produce and what effects their historical knowledge production has in the present.

In particular, the thesis offers insights into social inequalities through an examination of how diverse historians and heritage makers approach migration and ethnic minority history. It presents the ways that historical knowledge is produced about this aspect of Tyneside through an examination of the works of several UK and international scholars; the public exhibitions at Discovery Museum with its permanent migration gallery Destination Tyneside; and the heritage project of a local black-led community group, the Angelou Centre, called 'BAM! Sistahood!'. The dissertation analyses the methods, concepts and self-understanding used in research and representations, and the political aspect of engagements with the past in each of the three fields. It offers insights into the relation of the researchers to their research topics and their use of specific sources. It also portrays inequalities in access and privilege in knowledge-making. This research shows the relationship between the three perspectives and how they complement, and in some cases contradict each other, as well as their relative positioning within power relationships. These findings offer increased understanding of how the past is valued by a diversity of actors and institutions, how it can contribute to the present, and in what ways uses of the past may be problematic.

### **1.3.2. Theoretical approach**

In order to examine these questions, the research takes a critical social sciences approach to theorising, data collection and analysis. Within the critical research tradition, it considers knowledge production about the past as situated within individual, social,

historical, and ideological forces. The research integrates subjective and objective analysis (Wacquant and Bourdieu, 1992; Saukko, 2005; Ramazanoğlu, 1993), studying the role of actors and their subjective experiences, as well as examining the objective structural basis of their work and practice. This enables an interrogation of the 'correspondence between social structures and mental structures' involved in how historians, institutions and individuals construct and represent history and heritage (in Wacquant and Bourdieu, 1992, p. 12). This 'double reading' enables an analysis of the interrelationship between external realities and internal realities: policies, structures and systems, and people's perceptions of these. It allows close inspection both of structures of power and relations of meaning. In order to understand the processes involved in uses of the past in the present, it investigates both the objective structures at their basis, and the role and experiences of agents within them. It considers subjective analysis and interpretation as essential to an understanding of social reality (Reinharz, 1992, p. 18; Saukko, 2005, p. 348). Knowledge emerging from lived experiences is not purely subjective, but constitutes objective reality (Ramazanoğlu, 1993).

The study also embraces the ethos of co-production of research knowledge. This is based on the idea that attention to a multitude of voices and questions can create deeper insights into subjects studied (Pente *et al.*, 2015; Durose *et al.*, 2013), and that communities or individuals are experts in their own lived experiences (Cuthill, 2010; Muirhead and Woolcock, 2008). The research for this thesis was not fully participatory and collaborative. However, the exchange with groups and individuals outside as well as inside academia who have experiences with the issues this research engages in was essential.

The research investigates the power relations at play between structures and meanings, and considers itself as situated within society and its power relations (see Kincheloe, McLaren, 2005). Positioned within a feminist framework, it aims to critique and disrupt the reproduction of the inequalities and oppression of this social reality (Ramazanoğlu, Holland, 2002). Critical theory holds that abstract theory alone is not in tune with practical requirements and experiences – what *ought* to be has to be negotiated through what *is*. Ideas are critically considered in relation to reality; theory and practice have to inform one another (Habermas, 1998), so that theory can most effectively transform existing practices (Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

### **1.3.3. Case study**

The research used a case study approach to investigate larger questions about the societal conditions of history and heritage-making, maintaining that specific conditions and contingencies as well as individual actors play important roles in these. Through a case study approach, 'concrete context-dependent knowledge' can be gained (Flyvbjerg, 2011,

p. 302). The strength of case studies is depth and complex and nuanced understanding of process and context (Flyvbjerg, 2011p. 314), as well as detailed understanding of causation, of the relationship between inputs and outputs (Hammersley *et al*, 2000, p. 234; Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 314). This close investigation of localised cases can enable the theorisation of wider historical and political structures, while remaining attuned to the complexities of their manifestation (Saukko, 2005, p. 348).

Newcastle Upon Tyne and the surrounding area of Tyneside was chosen as a case study offering discreet boundaries to this investigation of perspectives on minorities and migration in the UK. The port cities near Newcastle have experienced steady migration, as well as settlement for over 150 years and allow a long-term perspective on this topic. The region is shaped by historic and present migration of people from Ireland, Scotland, Cumbria, Scandinavia, Aden, Somalia, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Byrne, 1977; Tabili, 2011; Renton, 2007). While the region has experienced historic migration, it is less ethnically diverse than most other parts of the country. Within England, the North East has one of the least ethnically diverse populations, with over 95 per cent identifying as White (ONS, 2012, p. 8), compared to 60 per cent in London and 86 per cent across England and Wales. The North East also has the highest percentage of people describing their national identity as English (see ONS, 2012), and a comparatively low number of residents having a main language other than English (ONS, 2013). While migration is nevertheless constitutive of the region, it does not figure at the heart of its own self narrative – although the area does affirm its public image as a welcoming place for newcomers (Renton, 2007; Hackett, 2009; Carr, 1992). Contrasting views on whose history and heritage are part of the region, make it a relevant site to investigate power relations at play in representations of the past and their role in the public sphere. This case study can provide research results that are applicable to other local, regional or national contexts. In comparison with other studies, where existing, this regional study is shown to be pertinent to broader themes and trends. It thus has not purely regional significance, but has wider import for the study of the role of the past in society.

Narratives of the North East have long depicted a unified regional culture at the expense of regional diversity. White working men are at the centre of the cultural public image of the area (Vall, 2007), based on the memorialisation of Tyneside's growth from the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a centre for new industrial production in coal mining, iron and steel, engineering and chemicals (Hudson, 2005). The last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, has seen this industry decline. While efforts have been made to introduce new industries, with investment in cultural urban regeneration (Bailey *et al*, 2004), the main cultural narrative of the past decades is shaped by memories of decline (Mason *et al*, 2016). The region's self-image also affirms the distinctness of the North from the South (Huggins and Gregson, 2007; Vall, 2007). The population of the North currently has a lower life

expectancy, residents are more often in poverty than in the South, with the divide growing and the North being most badly hit by the 2008 crash (Coe and Jones, 2010; Dorling, 2010). The North East also experiences higher levels of unemployment and ill-health than other parts of the country (Hamnett, 2014). Between 2008 and 2017, alongside this story of decline and national division, the population of the North East has grown, with the number of residents not born in the UK rising by over 40% (ONS, 2018). With the recent increase in diversity, it becomes necessary to investigate migration and diversity narratives in a place that has attracted a limited amount of historical or heritage research on the topic, and only a few institutional representations.

To advance this research into Tyneside as a case study of history and heritage making, suitable examples were selected from the three perspectives of academia, museums and bottom-up. The works of academics Richard Lawless, Dave Renton and Laura Tabili, who have published academic histories on the area's migration pasts, were identified for study. The Discovery Museum, home to one of a few permanent galleries in the UK on the topic of migration, provided an excellent example of institutional approaches to history and heritage. Finally, contact was established with a local black-led women's organisation, the Angelou Centre, who conducted in 2012-16 the HLF funded heritage project BAM! Sistahood!, to research and document the history and heritage of Black and minority women's migration to the area. Where relevant and appropriate, the analyses of each of these sites indicate how my findings correspond to wider academic literature investigating similar questions. This is not always possible, due to a lack of existing research into, for example, bottom-up *history*-making. Where this comparison with the wider research field is not possible my findings provide inspiration and a point of reference for future studies. This research was designed to investigate knowledge-making from all three perspectives, the function of their history and heritage-making within the public sphere, as well as the relationships between them, and the motivations and experiences of individuals involved in shaping them.

#### **1.3.4. Research methods and analysis**

The research used textual analysis and interview approaches to analyse the interaction between agents and social structures in history and heritage making, taking seriously individuals' and groups' analyses of social reality (Saukko, 2005). The research of each field – academics, museums and bottom-up – involved two types of data collection to allow for subjective and objective analysis. One employed interviews and focus groups with makers, researchers and representers of knowledge about the past to research process and self-understanding. The other inspected outcomes and products of knowledge-making about the past using observation and text analysis. This integrated the

analysis of existing images and texts as physical realities and subjective interpretive experiences and actions within these realities.

The research examined published histories, exhibition texts and websites as primary sources to show what discourses were created (Rose, 2012; Hodder, 2000). This included image analysis, understanding language and images as inextricably entangled. Similarly to feminist content analysis, this analysis is a 'study both of texts that exist and texts that do not' (Reinharz, 1992, p.163). Ethnographic and interview research was used to appreciate people's understandings and experiences within all three fields of heritage and history making. Participant observation, a key method to enable 'people to learn more about society' (Gans, 2011, p. 116) was used to understand practices and processes, which were ordinary and everyday to those who performed them and thus might not have been mentioned in interviews (Goffman, 2002). The observational fieldwork was used to gain a basic understanding of the normal encounters and day-to-day experiences of those involved in the BAM! Sistahood! heritage project. This investigated interviewees' experiences of power and perceptions of hierarchy, and can be understood as an 'antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether' (Reinharz, 1992, p. 19). Ethnographic research was conducted to further the 'researcher's immersion in social settings, and aim for intersubjective understanding between researchers and the person(s) studied' (Reinharz, 1992, p. 46). My presence and research at history and heritage events and conversations in all three fields established my familiarity with those involved and established trust and ground to build on in the interviews.

The data was analysed to understand structures and meanings in representations of the past in present society. It employed an integrative approach, combining objective and subjective analysis (Saukko, 2005), based on a qualitative and largely interpretative framework. Interviews were also analysed to understand interpretations of social structures and actors' roles within them (Saukko, 2005). They were coded with the software NVivo to analyse main themes. These themes and ethnographic data from the three fields were compared for similarities and differences. Text was analysed to show the themes knowledge-makers investigate, the representation of content, and their effects in the present. The link between discourse and social positioning was also analysed, as 'a statement coming from a source endowed with authority ... is likely to be more productive than one coming from a marginalised social position' (Rose, 2012, p. 220). In line with historical, image and feminist methods, I analysed the themes the texts chose as important, and how they constructed an understanding of the relationship of the past to the present (Johnson, 2012).

### **1.3.5. Ethics, limitations, challenges**

This research was based on a constant interaction with the people I was researching. The research examined existing practices, how professionals reflect and impact on them, the structural challenges they face and finally, through taking part in a heritage project myself, I aimed to understand the practical everyday problems of professionals. As well as lending my experience in historical research to their project, my research benefited from participants' and organisers' experience and reflections as Black and minority women in Newcastle. Conversations and consultations made me aware of my limitations and challenged my preconceptions. It also made me aware of the limits of rigidly theoretical approaches. Practical experiences and exchanges informed the research process as well as the theoretical basis and examination. During my fieldwork, I constantly reflected on my role within the project and within academia, my participation in shaping understandings of history, and responses and exchanges I encountered. My research benefited from the diverse viewpoints encountered in all three fields. The BAM! Sistahood! project's focus on migration and minority women of the last 70 years impacted on my research focus and its black feminist theoretical foundation shifted my concerns to be more aware of intersectional understandings of power relations and warranted a commitment to feminist methods and positions. The study thus developed as a result of conversations, exchanges and experiences during the BAM! Sistahood project, as well as during academic conferences and discussions with academic historians, heritage researchers and museum professionals. Self-reflection, revision and the development of approaches were a fundamental part of this research, with theory and practice converging.

I conducted the research in line with the Northumbria University ethics committee's recommendations. I used information sheets to approach potential interviewees and informed consent to ensure participants were aware what the material was used for. In the case of participants at the BAM! Sistahood! project, some of them vulnerable women, I approached a case worker at the Centre before interviews to ensure no sensitive material or questions would be included that could harm participants or the researcher. I sent focus group outlines and interview questions to the caseworker and received feedback before conducting the research.

A limitation of this research is arguably the strict focus on academic written texts and the specific exhibition and heritage project, which means that the work studied does not include published memoirs and community histories, such as Lewis Olsover's and Chris Mullard's books on the Jewish communities in the North East and Black Britain respectively. This was however a pragmatic decision to draw concise boundaries around the fields explored. Problematically, this meant excluding historic and testimonial works of self-representation, in order to clearly draw out the 'academic', 'museum' and 'bottom-up' perspectives.

## 1.4. Self-reflection

As I acknowledge that research is a highly personal process, I will briefly state my personal role in this research, and the choice of this research subject. I grew up in Vienna, Austria, in the 1990s, and through my family and social environment felt very strongly that the Austrian past, Austria's role in the Holocaust and the Second World War was formative for its present population. This very much involved an acknowledgement of guilt, of being part of a perpetrator society, and being personally implicated through family ties. I moved to the UK for my studies, and my interest in the public history of the Holocaust led me to spend almost one year at the educational centre of the Buchenwald Memorial, a former concentration camp. My months there, and especially the geographic proximity of the city of Weimar to Buchenwald, and what educators called "the opportunity to know" strengthened my quest to understand guilt and personal responsibility for historic, but also present, wrongs. I came to my PhD to understand the responsibility of the historian, and more broadly the academic, to investigate the effect that knowledge of the past has, but also how academia operates and excludes. My thesis, of course, is not an answer to this wide range of questions, but it is an attempt to locate academic researchers in a highly unequal society.

The past can give a perspective on present shifts and challenges of the present. But the past is also used to support those who fear change. It can be used to instil the wish in people that a society can go back to how it was before – or an idealised version of this 'before'. It can offer things to keep and preserve, to shield from change. A concern to understand the uses of the past by a multitude of actors with diverse agendas, and their political implications, is at the heart of this thesis. Central in present debates is the crisis of expertise and trust in knowledge, with uncertainty of what knowledge can be trusted as legitimate, and how to critically engage in a quest for understanding, while being aware of totalising assertions about truth.

All three perspectives researched in this study are diverse fields and I established points of contact and identification in each of them. Therefore, I do not feel that I am strongly an insider or outsider to any of the three strands. My role as a researcher in heritage studies places me within that academic field. My undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in history departments connect me with this discipline, but I am no longer formally within that field, whereas the objects of my study were academically affiliated to history departments. Through the entanglement of heritage research and museums studies and the experience and comfort of museums with undertaking and facilitating research, I was not strictly an outsider in this environment. The Angelou Centre, the location of the bottom-up approach studied here, has a history of undertaking, facilitating and welcoming research,



researchers and student placements. Through my prolonged involvement with the group, I was very comfortable in this setting and was not made to feel an outsider or intruder. Our shared gender enabled a connection with many participant women, while language, class and religion, however, created links amongst some of the participant women, while positioning me as distinct. I would not claim to have overcome all differences. With relationships and connections forming, differences and similarities were sometimes felt more strongly than at other times. As a non-UK citizen and a migrant myself, a further connection was formed between me and some participant women, who were migrants – although being an EU migrant did put me in a different, and more secure, position to, for example, international migrants or women who were seeking asylum. While I enjoyed both legal and financial security – even if the UK's impending exit from the European Union brings some uncertainty – several of the women I met were, for example, dependent on asylum or benefit payments. I also formed connections with some of the staff – who for the most part have lived in the North East, or England, all their lives – through shared research or political interests.

## **1.5. Definitions**

This thesis draws on the disciplines of Heritage Studies and History, and thus a definition of terms is necessary.

'The past' is used here in its broadest sense, as that which is *past*, and therefore absent, rather than present (Carr, 2006; Passmore, 2003). The past is differentiated in this study from 'history' and 'heritage', which are both practices, or ways of making knowledge of and meaning about the past in the present. Sharon Macdonald uses the term 'past-presencing' to include the different ways people utilise the past in the present (2013). 'History' and 'heritage', then, are practices of past-presencing.

'History' is used as a research and evidence-based method through which – however incomplete – knowledge about the past is created (Arnold, 2000; Jay, 1992). What counts as reliable evidence, and how this evidence is selected and interpreted, is contested (Arnold, 2000; Jordanova, 2006; Tosh, 1984; Kushner, 2001; Hall, 2017).

'Heritage' is used, following Smith and Ashley, as a discourse and process conveying importance and value about things related to the past (Smith, 2006; Ashley, 2014). This value is created by national or international institutions, but also by groups and individuals who create alternative understandings of heritage (Smith, 2006). Importantly for this dissertation, this perspective understands heritage as signalling the importance of specific aspects of the past in the present, created within present power structures, and as a tool for control as well as resistance.

The term 'public' is defined here as that which is of wider concern for society (Fraser, 1992; Tosh, 2014; Rüsen, 1994), rather than personal or private (Tosh, 2008). The boundaries of the term are, however, porous, and indeed importantly so. Feminist critiques of the public/private divide have shown that a strict divide serves to consolidate the domination of men over women in what is termed the domestic sphere (Okin, 1991), while critics also show that cultural differences have political and public import, rather than purely personal and individual significance (Laborde, 2008; Fraser, 1992). Thus, this thesis employs an open definition of what counts as 'public', one that can include domestic issues, gender and cultural issues as well as community and neighbourhood networks, if these are *presented* as 'of common concern' (Okin, 1991; Lister, 1997).

The thesis understands 'knowledge' as a 'collective good' that is constituted and trusted by a knowledge community (Tozzi, 2012, p. 16). Knowledge here is created by 'forms of talk that claim that something is knowledge, challenge knowledge, testify to knowledge, question knowledge' (Tozzi, 2012, p. 15). The thesis also builds on Jordanova's definition of historical knowledge as negotiated by a 'community of belief', where specific ways of knowing and evidence are trusted (Jordanova, 2006, p. 91). Knowledge about the past is not stable or complete, but partial (Fulbrook, 2002; Jay, 1992; Appleby, Hunt, Jacob, 1994).

'Inequality' here is fundamentally linked to differentials in power. In an unequal society, gender, ethnicity, class, religion, ability and sexuality impact on people's status (Anderson, 1999; Fraser, 2005). Those with lower status have less *control* over social and democratic processes (Anderson, 1999), over their own lives (Philips, 1991), and over interpretations of their experiences (Young, 2000; Collins, 1991).

The term 'unequal present' is used in connection to ideas about the *past* to emphasise the present as a specific historical moment. It denotes the present as situated, rather than neutral: as shaped by historical structures and by historical inequality, that persists into the world we live in now (Nutti, 2019).

## 1.6. Structure of thesis

The thesis is divided into three parts. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on context, theory and methods; Chapters 3, 4 and 5 focus on data analysis; Chapters 6 and 7 on comparative analysis and overall findings.

**Chapter 1** introduces the main themes and aims of the thesis, locating it within critical heritage research and historical theory. The aim to understand how knowledge-making about the past functions in a structurally unequal present, where large parts of society are underrepresented as authorised history- and heritage-makers, is hoped to enlighten

knowledge-making about the past as a location where inequality is contested as well as reproduced. This chapter also justifies the case study approach, which offers a concrete and localised study, within the North East of England of three perspectives on knowledge-making: published academic histories, a permanent migration gallery and a bottom-up community project. It also outlines the qualitative methods employed in this study. Data was collected from academic historians, museums and bottom-up producers, through interviews, documents and published materials and analysed according to emergent themes. The chapter then defines key terms: 'the past', 'history', 'heritage', 'public', 'knowledge', 'inequality' and 'unequal present'.

**Chapter 2** provides an overview of relevant academic literature, situating this interdisciplinary study within academic debates. It outlines how theorists of history have conceptualised questions on methods, reliability and partiality, and the role of academics in making knowledge based on sources, as well as how they have discussed the importance of the past for the present. It then moves to an examination of academic approaches to migration histories and histories of marginalised and racialised groups, investigating how issues of evidence and identity categories are addressed in this perspective. The review of museum studies literature asks how scholars have approached issues of authorisation and hierarchies, as well as how these issues are treated in literature specifically focusing on migration displays. The review then discusses how critical heritage scholars have studied the role of the past in people's lives in the present, as well as the role of power within societal engagements. This thesis identifies a gap in the discussed literature in terms of understanding academics' and non-academics' relations to the past, diverse contributions to knowledge-making in public and their relation to inequality.

**Chapter 3** focuses on the first of the three perspectives: why and how academics have researched migration to Tyneside, presenting interviews and publications from academic historians. It identifies academics' motivations for conducting research into the past and the use they see for historical perspectives in society. It then outlines the sources they employ to create and present knowledge, providing an overview of the themes covered. It then interrogates how the importance of these histories is asserted, and how or if they claim to be of public import. The chapter then assesses the effects of the histories produced, particularly on present-day inequality.

**Chapter 4** discusses the second perspective: why and how the Discovery Museum researched and represented migration to Tyneside in their Destination Tyneside display. The chapter investigates interviews, published accounts, documents, and the exhibition display to show the aims of the museum and its migration gallery and how the museum as well as its staff conceptualise the role of the museum and the importance of the past. The process of making the exhibition is then analysed to investigate what sources were

employed and had a role in making knowledge about past migration, as well as how this knowledge is positioned in terms of its value. The publicness of the display is then investigated, to give insights into how the museum defines and understands its public role and the position of migration and minority history within this public space. The chapter finally asks what types of effects the knowledge presented in this gallery, as well as the process of creating this gallery, has in the present.

**Chapter 5** investigates the final perspective: why and how bottom-up researchers investigate and represent women's migration to the North East of England, using the example of the heritage project BAM! Sistahood! by the Angelou Centre. Interviews ask about the importance of the past for the project organisers and participants, and their motivations for their engagement with the past. It then analyses how the project approached the making of knowledge about the past, the actors involved, and the strategies employed to enable self-representation. The chapter examines how knowledge status is claimed, discussing approaches to sources, and the themes covered in engagements and representations. The chapter then analyses how the knowledge-making in this case made claims to be of common concern as well as the barriers or conflict in accessing public space. The chapter finally interrogates the effects of this perspective on historical knowledge-making and how the project and participants consider their role in challenging institutional structures of history- and heritage-making.

**Chapter 6** offers a comparative analysis, considering all three perspectives and the motivations, production, publicness and effects of the knowledge produced. It discusses the differences between academic, museum and bottom-up perspectives' relationships to the research they are conducting, calling into question ideas of 'neutrality'. The chapter then discusses how the three perspectives approach the nature of historical evidence and what factors impact on the knowledge they create. It then compares the three perspectives in terms of their approach to what issues they consider to be shared and public, as well as how they contest or confirm definitions of 'publicness'. The final section compares effects of the accounts, in terms of how they aid the diagnosis of present inequality and racism and how their practices are situated within this inequality.

**Chapter 8** summarises the thesis' key findings in response to the question of how knowledge-making about the past matters and its functions in an unequal society, and the original contribution to knowledge. It also sets out the need for further research into different perspectives on the past, the potential for diversifying and democratising representations of the past, and structural inequalities in these representations.

## **2. PERSPECTIVES ON KNOWLEDGE-MAKING ABOUT THE PAST**

### **Introduction**

The following overview brings together the varied theoretical approaches employed and issues identified within three sets of literature: Academic history, museum studies and bottom-up accounts of the past as heritage. By enlightening the methodologies, epistemologies and ontologies of each perspective, this review clarifies the ways different actors and institutions are investigated as making knowledge about the past as well as the role of power and inequality in these practices. The chapter investigates who is considered as part of the processes that create relations between the past and the present and which actors are perceived to be qualified for the endeavour of knowledge-production, in order to examine the underlying orientations and assumptions that influence how minority pasts are presented in the UK.

This chapter offers an overview of how scholars have approached, first, the academic historical knowledge-production, secondly, the role of museums in making and shaping public understanding about the past, thirdly, the manifestations and the role of the past in the present within bottom-up heritage engagements. Literature by academic historians and theorists of history is examined here to shed light on the specific expertise and methods of academic history in making knowledge about the past. It clarifies how academics conceive of the nature of historical knowledge produced through academic research, and the role of the researcher and sources in this process. This review also asks how academic historians have considered the use of historical understanding for the present, as well as how they consider their own role, as well as non-academics' role in knowledge-making for public use. Academic historians' approaches to the writing of migration and minority history give insights into the role of evidence and sources, as well as their limitations for knowing about these specific pasts. The engagement with museum studies that follows elucidates how this field analyses the institutional background to relations with the past and considers museums' function in shaping societies' engagements with the past. Museum scholars' writings on displays about migration history provide insights of museums' roles in negotiating belonging in society, while scholars also interrogate how power relations continue to shape the making of diverse knowledge about the past. The field of heritage studies, especially critical approaches, have asked further about the role power plays in societal engagements and representations. A review of this literature details how the role of bottom up heritage in contesting authorised discourses about the past is theorised. The chapter concludes by pointing out gaps in the literature in

relation to the making of knowledge about the past and the inequalities this challenges or reproduces.

## **2.1. Historical perspectives**

An investigation of academic approaches sheds light on how historians conceive of the relationship between the past and the present and the methods they employ to know about the past. This helps to understand how academic historians consider their discipline's contribution to knowledge-making, the role of these histories in society, as well as the limitations of specific aspects of history-making.

Scholars argue that in historical research, the subject of enquiry is absent – the past has gone forever (Carr, 2006; Passmore, 2003). Academic historians have debated the relationship between the absent past and the representation of it in the writing of historical works. They ask about the link between what they write and what actually occurred in the past. For the field of academic history, the focus on the historical method is important in asserting the reliability of historical research. Historical theory that deals with History<sup>2</sup> as a discipline is concerned with reflections on the practice of History and takes a step back to engage in questions around it (Passmore, 2003; Lemon, 2003). The theories deal with questions about how historians study the past. The discipline and its method has been questioned from both within and without, with lively debates especially since the 1960s concerning the situatedness of the historian, the exclusionary focus on certain narratives, and the categories that inform historical knowledge (respectively Carr, 2001; Thompson, 1991; Foucault, 1989a). While these criticisms did not radically change the course of the profession, they challenged accepted assumptions and stimulated reflection on historical practices (Passmore, 2003). Historians were prompted to develop more sophisticated positions concerning the integrity of the historical method (Elton, 1969; Tosh, 1984).

Traditionally, historians access the absent past through its remaining material traces in archival and documentary sources. The modern discipline of History originated from the aspiration to reconstruct the past 'as it actually happened' (Warren, 2003). The German historian Leopold von Ranke capitalised on the importance of the critical evaluation of primary evidence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Warren, 2003). The introduction of documentary methods to the historical discipline made Ranke the father of modern historiography (Green and Troup, 1999). Historians rely on evidence and sources – preserved by chance or on purpose – that they are trained to critically assess, and they thus can – and must –

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<sup>2</sup> To avoid confusion between history as subject and object of enquiry, the discipline of History (subject) will be capitalised in what follows.

offer informed interpretations of events that happened (Evans, 1997; Collingwood, 1993; Jay, 1992). However, not all academics agree on what constitutes historical evidence, and Hilda Kean argues that the remains of the past outside official archives also offer valid historical evidence (Kean, 2004, p. 10).

Many historians now acknowledge their role in shaping the investigative process and in bringing their individual perspectives to interpretations, while also stressing the integrity of precise historical methods, and the role of contestation and debate in the academic community (Appleby, Hunt, Jacob, 1994; Jordanova, 2006). This approach accepts that historians have personal connections with the past, just as anyone else does. As Jay Winter puts it: 'historians have memories, too, and their choice of subject is rarely accidental' (Winter, 2009, p. 255). These personal connections with the past influence historians' research: the formulation of research questions, the interpretation of sources and seeing or not seeing specific evidence (Jordanova, 2006; Kean and Ashton, 2009; Hall, 2017). The historian is seen to be in an interactive relationship with their subject of enquiry (Morgan, 2006).

Some interrogate how this research process is impacted by its mediation through language. Sue Morgan, following White's analysis, argues that historians 'impose a linguistic shape upon the past that the past itself doesn't have' (Morgan, 2006, p. 17). A distinction is thus drawn between the 'past', as the events that happened, and 'history'. It is argued that history is what historians, or people involved in the historical discipline, make of the written remains of the past, through language (Jenkins, 1995; Munslow, 2007; Morgan, 2006). White claims that histories have no *direct* relationship to what actually happened in the past (White, 1987; Ahlskog, 2017). While historians find factual evidence, they convey the content of their account of this evidence in the form of a 'plot'. While he does not question that things really happened in the past, White argues that it is the emplotment that gives *meaning* to what happened (White, 1987). While some scholars thus see a fundamental difference between the work of the historian and 'real events' (White, 1987; Jenkins, 1995), others have claimed that there is no such thing as unmediated pre-linguistic reality (Jay, 1992; Carr, 2006; Nirenberg, 1996) and historians' work is therefore similar to the actual experience of historical events.

Considering the reliance of the historical investigative process on researchers and the language they employ, Appleby, Hunt and Jacob propose that historians' enquiries can establish versions of the past, where 'none will have the last word' (Appleby, Hunt, Jacob, 1994, p. 10). Mary Fulbrook accordingly calls historical accounts 'partial histories' (2002, p. 185). There is no claim to total historical reconstruction and equation with the past. Historical representation can be constantly challenged from different directions and stable images unsettled – historians talk about multiple histories that are never definitive (White, 1986; Appleby, Hunt, Jacob, 1994).

However, historians have also debated the limits of these multiple historical narratives, to ensure that one narrative was not understood as equally valid as another (Friedlander, 1992). Many historians have argued for a critical approach that is aware of the potentially biased nature of history writing, that at the same time draws the line at relativism (Jay, 1992; Appleby, Hunt, Jacob, 1994). They argue that it is the duty of the historian to judge and enquire into the trustworthiness of their evidence and their witnesses from the past, but also to be transparent about methods, so as to be open to further challenges and changes (Jay, 1992; Jordanova, 2006). Because of this contestability, Jordanova argues for the use of 'trust' in method and accountability rather than of 'truth' as a category for judgement, as truth implies a 'final, complete account' (2006, p. 91). Martin Jay argues that the role of the historian is to put forward a narrative about the past, which is then open to criticism from the academic community. This narrative is not fictional, rather the transparent use of methods make it verifiable as well as contestable (1992). Arnold argues that History is a process of research and interpretation and of argument between historians over questions of interpretation (Arnold, 2000). Appleby, Hunt, Jacob extend these debates about interpretation beyond the academy, believing in history as a 'democratic search for truth usable by all peoples' (1994, p. 11).

While these accounts clarify the epistemological basis of the historical discipline, philosopher of history Verónica Tozzi also sees a moral component to issues of trust. She discusses knowledge-production in social terms and as being created within an epistemic community, similar to the way academic historians have described historical knowledge. This social account of epistemology considers knowledge to be created by agreement and dependent on acts of trust amongst members of a community. Tozzi sees knowledge as a status that is conferred through acts that challenge, claim or testify (Tozzi, 2012, p. 15). When someone's testimony is accepted, their expertise is trusted. Tozzi argues that this process of creating the status of knowledge has a moral dimension too, as each time someone's testimony is trusted, the informant is honoured. She states that '[E]very time we recognize that someone is trustworthy, we honor him or her as well, and we encourage others to do likewise.' (Tozzi, 2012, p. 16). This analysis sheds light on the moral dimension of producing historical knowledge.

Historians have made various claims about the uses of history for situating and analysing the present. The 'historical past' has been argued to have no relevance for the present, as opposed to the 'practical past', which orientates people in their lives (White, 2014). Philosopher of history Kalle Pihlainen, drawing on White's concept of the 'historical past', describes the past that historians write as an island, completely separate from the present (Pihlainen, 2016). Several historians and historical theorists argue that historical understanding highlights the distance between past and present, considering the past as



distant from the present (Hartog, 2015; Tosh, 2008). Historical research into the past enables a view 'from afar' (Hartog, 2015, p. xv).

Many historians and philosophers of history consider the use of this history for present reflection and action. John Tosh suggests historical thinking has two basic roles in enquiring into and understanding the present (Tosh, 2008). One is to acknowledge the fundamental difference between past and present: the fact that our social, political and intellectual framework is not the same as those of people at different points in the past. The other is to convey an understanding of how the present came to be through exploring what developments and events led to the present state of affairs. In the *History Manifesto*, Armitage and Guldi argue for similar uses. They advocate the role of History in providing long-term perspectives on present circumstances and claim that History has a role to play in contextualising societies' inequalities and our relationship with the environment (Armitage and Guldi, 2014). Historical education often argues for the use of historical knowledge in offering alternative perspectives on the present, as well as critical understandings of historical developments (Zinn, 2009; Seixas, 2006).

Some academic historians specifically distinguish academic expertise from societal ways of making meaning from the past (Tosh, 2008; Zuckerman, 2000; Blight, 2009). Linda Shopes clearly conceives of popular engagements as emotional rather than rational, asserting that more exchange between academic historians and community historians would lead to a beneficial change in attitudes on both sides, where 'scholars do not get to exercise critical judgement quite so forcefully or conform to current historiographic thinking quite so deftly; laypeople do not get to romanticize the past quite so easily' (Shopes, 2002, p. 597). Tosh fears that personal connections and experiences wrongly claim authenticity and immediateness (Tosh, 2008), claiming that individual historical experiences have to be mediated and interpreted by professional historians (Tosh, 2008; Blight, 2009).

Tosh draws on Jürgen Habermas', the foundational theorist of the public sphere, definition of publicness to articulate the specific contribution academic historians can make to public discourse, proposing public history as a tool in a functioning deliberative democracy (2008; 2014). He defines the interpretive categories that mark events and ideas as of public concern, stating:

it [public history] points up the need for citizens to have access to relevant information which goes far beyond what is available through their community affiliations or their engagement with "heritage". Responsible citizenship includes forming a judgement on issues that do not bear directly on the individual's immediate interests: for example the underlying drift of welfare policy, rather than the fate of a local hospital; or international relations, as distinct from the presence of neighbours from foreign countries. (Tosh, 2014, p. 198)

Tosh draws a rigid distinction between history (public) and heritage (individual/private) and seeks a clear formulation of which relationships with the past are personal and which are public. Michael Zuckerman also makes this distinction, analysing a retreat into personal and family engagements with the past as showing a deep disengagement from history, public issues and the wider world (Zuckerman, 2000). Hilda Kean, however, argues that personal pasts should not be contrasted with wider public issues, but rather as connected (2010). Jill Liddington, too, makes a connection between personal and public, while also agreeing that one aspect of public history is 'to see how a local or personal story illuminates the more general picture' (2002, p. 90). Echoing this connection between personal experience and wider concerns, Jörn Rüsen proposes that history connects personal experiences with wider ideas. In his conceptualisation, historical thinking links personal experiences with events and ideas beyond the limits of personal memory and connects this with expectations for the future, or goes beyond what the person has experienced first-hand (1994). Personal engagement with the past is not purely personal, when it extends beyond personal time and meaning, which makes it 'historical' (Rüsen, 1994, p. 11).

Liddington however also asserts that not all academic history-making is necessarily public. She sees the lack of communication as a central obstacle to the publicness of academic history. Liddington argues that the location of this knowledge-making in exclusive outlets, such as academic journals and books, makes it private, suggesting that the practice of public history needs to take the role of audiences seriously as well as to be aware about issues of access (2002). She also argues that public history should think of the public as active participants, rather than private consumers – an argument shared by John Tosh (2008). This adds nuance to Tosh's definition, while also supporting the central point about the public aspects of historical content, the need to connect stories or experiences to a 'general picture'.

Wider debates in political theory about the public sphere help to illuminate this debate, and are especially important in exploring different conceptions of the personal or private in the public sphere. The concept of the public sphere is fundamental to many democratic theories. It denotes the arena in which private citizens come together in public spaces open to all to exchange their opinions and ensure the accountability and legitimacy of political power (Habermas, 1989). Publics are thus involved in the decision-making process, legitimising democratic politics (Barnett, 2004). This always happens through mediation, as there is no one unmediated will of the public, or the people (Barnett, 2008).

What makes issues of public concern, however, is contested. In mainstream liberal political theory, cultural, ethnic and gender identifiers and corresponding interests have been deemed personal or private, and not part of public debate and formal political

concerns (Okin, 1991). The concept of the public sphere as built on the idea of a homogeneous group of equals, has relegated concerns that indicate difference and inequality to the private sphere and thus seen as not needing public debate. This, for example, has been the case in how domestic issues, such as inequality and violence in the family, could be justified in liberal political thought through the divide between public (non-domestic) and private (domestic) (Okin, 1991). Other feminists have argued that further issues which have been confined by political theorists to the private or quasi-private sphere (such as community and neighbourhood activities, as well as domestic relationships and labour division), have political and public import (Okin, 1991; Lister, 1997; Williams, 1997). Lister shows the limitations of a strict public/private divide, analysing women's activism as 'operating at the interstices of the public and the private, motivated often initially by personal, domestic concerns, frequently, but not necessarily affecting their children' (Lister, 1997, p. 149). She analyses the process whereby the making public of 'experiences of sexual oppression and domestic violence, previously quintessentially private' contributes to revised understandings of citizenship (1997, p.153). Fraser similarly proposes that it is through contestation and debate, that issues become accepted as of common concern (1992, p. 129).

Habermas and theorists in his tradition have also been criticised for a limited understanding of the impact of inequalities on public deliberation. Young has argued the public sphere, as conceptualised by Habermas as a level playing field, advantages some and disadvantages others from participating in public debate and having influence in decision-making processes (Young, 2000; Fraser, 2005; Anderson, 1999). As the public sphere is an essential arena for democratic deliberation, recognition of cultural difference serves as a means to achieve what Fraser calls 'parity of participation', and what Anderson considers to be democratic equality (Fraser, 2005; Anderson, 1999). Young has further articulated the need to consider public expressions of group-based movements and situated knowledge, often dismissed as 'identity politics' and thus not public, as important contributions to public political debate. She suggests, rather, that public debate is 'a process in which differentiated social groups should attend to the particular situation of others and be willing to work out just solutions ... to collective problems' (2000, p. 7). These thinkers offer insights into the role of difference for an understanding of 'the public' and how strict definitions of 'the public' exacerbates inequality by excluding citizens from decision-making. This is relevant for the way historians understand their own and the public's role in offering perspectives on the role of the past in the present.

Several historians propose that public history has to engage in the different ways and processes in which non-historians generate knowledge about the past (Kean, Ashton, 2009; see also Jordanova, 2006; Paul, 2015). These historians do not see the expert

academic as divided from 'the public' to whom they want to impart knowledge, and they take seriously diverse understandings of the importance of the past for the present for academics and non-academics (Kean and Ashton, 2009). Kean and Ashton affirm that 'The recognition of the historian's as much as the public's personal need for the past is key to different understandings of the past' (Kean and Ashton, 2009, p. 2). This situation of historians as humans within history has been discussed by several theorists, and it dissolves the boundary between academic historians and lay people. Martin Jay has highlighted the similarity between the academic mediating process and human mediation processes. He argues that events are experienced by individuals through narrativised mediation, and then given an academic historic narrative that is infused with meaning (Jay, 1992). David Carr similarly argues that people narrativise their experiences to fit them into their life story, mediating them before, during and after their actions (Carr, 2006). He interrogates how humans as historical agents have a sense of history, who think about how their life experiences and actions fit into the greater course of events (Carr, 2006).

Some researchers see this situation of humans within history as allowing for specific ways of knowing the past. Historians have started to engage in the 'co-production of historical knowledge', which sees academics working with community groups in the creation of histories (Pente *et al*, 2015). Pente *et al* see the role of non-academics in providing insights into 'people's lives, emotions and intellectual reasoning' (*ibid.*, p. 33). Marge Dresser reported of her plan to collaborate with a group of non-academics 'to marry academic research with the ethnographic expertise of minority activists' (Dresser, 2010, p. 61). She however also discussed the interplay between a diversity of actors involved in decisions about history in public, highlighting funders and publishers' priorities, as well as outlining the differences in perspectives from lay people and academics. In her experience, her non-academic collaborators were not interested in larger analytical frameworks or making connections beyond specific research findings (2010, p. 52).

Many historians nevertheless argue that there are specific insights that academic historians can provide to popular historical enquiries. As Rosenzweig puts it: 'By providing context and comparison and offering structural explanations, history professionals can turn differences between themselves and popular history makers into assets rather than barriers. ... They can make people aware of possibilities for transforming the status quo.' (Rosenzweig and Thelen, 1998, p. 188) The example given is 'how the civil rights movement broke the fetters of a stable and racist social order or how the CIO challenged entrenched notions of management "rights" can inspire people to work for social change in the present' (*ibid*, p. 188). Thelen also discusses the ways historians can provide context and understanding of circumstances and constraints, while non-academics can use their

imaginations to transcend time and place, and thus provide empathetic understandings to historical developments (Thelen, 2000).

Apart from offering critical understanding, academic knowledge-making about the past has been analysed as having specific effects on the present, even if unacknowledged by the researcher. Verónica Tozzi argues that all interpretations of the past, by academics and lay people alike, have practical consequences (2018, p. 66). The framing of historical narratives has ethical implications for writer and reader. Hannah R. Johnson asserts that historians writing about injustices in the past (in her example medieval blood libel) take ethical decisions. These are based around questions of self-involvement – personal distance or proximity to the events and ideas discussed. Historians can externalise events by labelling them, for example as ‘antisemitic’, thus clearly positioning themselves as not involved in these events in the past, and never potentially involved in any similar events in the present or future. They create an analytical distance between themselves and the events discussed. This helps to clearly establish responsibility and blame. She however cautions against ‘the pitfalls of such a comforting moralization of history, which preserves the operation of binary modes of thinking and insulates us from any sense of complicity with the historical forces of antisemitism’ (2012, p. 25). Historians can alternatively use historical analysis to show the possibility of a different outcome and contingent human behaviour, providing an analysis of the contexts in which people *become* perpetrators, rather than showing perpetrators as predetermined or necessarily predisposed to commit violence or injustices. This can serve to reflect on personal implication, and lead to critical self-reflection – potentially by author and reader (Johnson, 2012; Baberowski, 2005). This analysis is based on an understanding of the individual as situated within a ‘history and web of relations,’ which transmits responsibility onto them (Johnson, 2012, p. 86). In terms of group memory of racism, or rather group amnesia, Linda Alcoff similarly affirms the importance of an understanding of racism that implicates most social agents, rather than a few perpetrators. She argues for the development of a link between ‘moral culpability and its relation to social identity’, based on an understanding of white identity as implicated in and formed by the historical structures of racism (Alcoff, 1998, p. 18).

Discussions of historical power structures have also led historians to think more critically about the content of historical research. Some historians have aimed to refocus history writing on the excluded and marginalised (Thompson, 1991), while others have enquired into the structures behind the writing of exclusionary histories. Influenced by the writings of Michel Foucault, theorists started questioning categories used and shaped by contemporary discourses. Thinkers started to examine the power structures, which have created certain forms of knowledge (Danaher, Schirato, Webb, 2000). Foucault’s seminal *Madness and Civilization* forms part of post-structural challenges to metanarratives, such as teleological narratives of civilizational progress. It explores how western discourses

created the concept of insanity over the course of several centuries as a means of extending the state's social control (Foucault, 1989b). Foucault maintained that categories and structures shape understanding of real phenomena; he saw classifications as constructed, rather than natural (Foucault, 1989b). This is especially important in terms of how historical knowledge relates to historical experiences and reality.

Feminist scholars examine similar processes. Feminist scholars have been concerned with the role of historians in constructing identities in the past, through which gender knowledge is produced (Scott, 1999, p. 10). Joan Scott argues that using fixed concepts and oppositions between categories works to perpetuate perceived differences and establishes them as natural, where they are constructed. The category of gender is used to signify relationships of power in society (Scott, 1999). Scott contends that 'the separate treatment of women could serve to confirm their marginal and particularized relationships to those (male) subjects already established as dominant and universal' (Scott, 1999, p. 3). For example, E.P. Thompson, in *The Making of the English Working Class*, excluded women and non-white workers from the political narrative, universalising the experience of white men. Women were present in domestic and religious arenas, but not in political and work contexts (Scott, 1999). This research highlights the importance of examining various axes that contribute to the formation of particular experiences in society, by historicising experiences and questioning the construction of the binary opposition woman/man (1999, p. 40). Scott urges the critical questioning of methods of analysis and causality, where decisions are not taken "because they are women", but because of contingent historical experiences and relationships (Scott, 1999, p. 40). She argues that feminist history has to research historical processes and structures within which human agents attempt to 'construct an identity, a life, a set of relationships, a society within certain limits and with language – conceptual language that at once sets boundaries and contains the possibility for negation, resistance, reinterpretation' (Scott, 1999, p. 42).

These debates throw light on how academic historians conceive of the role of the researcher and the academic community in creating knowledge about the past, with many stressing the need for trusted historical methods and academic debate. From these affirmations emerge important questions about the rules of debate within the academic community and especially who is part of this academic community. Several academics have discussed the role of the public in historical knowledge-production, as well as developed definitions of what constitutes public engagement with the past. Theorists of history as well as feminist critics have emphasised the effects of academic history and the political nature of making knowledge about the past. This is especially pertinent when investigating knowledge-production about the past as contributing to social inequality, and the writing of histories of racialised groups.

## 2.2. Migration and minority groups in History

Critics have highlighted the problems of using existing historical methods and categories to represent the experiences of marginalised or disempowered groups. Several thinkers enquire into how historical exclusions are connected to societal and historical structures. They question how mainstream histories construct exclusionary narratives, perpetuating gender, ethnic, class and sexual stereotypes. Postcolonialists like Edward Said analyse the way ideas of the 'Orient' have been forged by the 'West', influencing and constructing identities and images, structuring and enforcing the hold of power by the West (1991). He affirms that '(b)ecause of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action' (Said, 1991, p. 3). In 'Can the subaltern speak?', Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak examines the difficulty of writing subaltern histories and questions how and indeed if it is possible to access forms of knowing from the non-elites of the past (Spivak, 2010). Subaltern histories attempt to write heterogeneous histories from different perspectives, questioning received concepts and essentialising definitions (Chakrabarty, 2000).

Feminist scholars and activists have been criticised for not paying enough attention to the variegated nature of women's experiences, or to axes of power among women, and thus perpetuating racist or imperial oppression. Amos and Parmar claim that 'the "herstory" which white women use to trace the roots of women's oppression or to justify some form of political practice is an imperial history rooted in the prejudices of colonial and neo-colonial periods, a "herstory" which suffers the same form of historical amnesia of white male historians, by ignoring the fundamental ways in which white women have benefitted from the oppression of Black people' (Amos and Parmar, 2006, p. 285). Critiques have been articulated by Black feminists<sup>3</sup> and post-colonial historians of feminist accounts that take 'whiteness' as the norm in their perspectives, just as male analysts take 'maleness' as a given (Mirza, 1997; Collins, 1991). Patricia Hill Collins examines traditions of black women's thought, arguing that the suppression of dissident voices functions as a tool for control and 'makes it easier for dominant groups to rule, because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization' (1991, p. 5). Through the recovery of these neglected traditions, Collins contests knowledge systems that marginalise black women and their ideas. The American scholar Elsa Barkley Brown argues that historical investigations have to take into account the relationship between, and the interconnection of, different experiences. She argues that it is not just a question of adding independent and isolated narratives to assemble different experiences into one complete image. Instead she asserts the structural relationality of

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<sup>3</sup> That is 'Black', capitalised, designating the political understanding originating in the 1970s, fighting oppression based on 'race'.

diverse experiences: for example, white American women's move into the labour force in the 70s and 80s was possible because of the provision of service work, such as cleaning, food and health, provided disproportionately by women of colour (Brown, 2006). She contends that a 'linear and symmetrical way of thinking' is not suited to describing the 'specifics of historical knowledge' (Brown, 2006, p. 301) and argues that many feminist historians' research had neglected the relationality of history – for example, how white women's experiences were directly influenced by black women's experiences and developments, and vice versa. She writes 'History is ... everybody talking at once' (Brown, 2006, p. 302), and, stressing the relational nature of history, that: 'We are likely to acknowledge that white middle-class women have had a different experience from African American, Latina, Asian American, and Native American women; but the relation, the fact that these histories exist simultaneously, in dialogue with each other, is seldom apparent in the studies we do, not even in those studies that perceive themselves as dealing with the diverse experiences of women' (Brown, 2006, p. 303).

Academic researchers in minority ethnic history aimed to adjust academic and public images of Britain and the British past by showing the importance of migration to the UK and pointing out gaps in historical scholarship (Fryer, 1984; Visram, 2002; Holmes, 1988). A key feature of books on immigrants and minorities is discussion of the hostility they faced. Often, this was framed by historians as a critical response to the representation of British Society as tolerant, open-minded and liberal. In his book called *A Tolerant Country?* Colin Holmes questioned this myth of toleration and liberalism (1991).

Panikos Panayi's work has a strong focus on racism towards various groups, especially Germans (1993), and he has recently examined the co-existence of multicultural policies with continuing racism (2010). Robert Winder examined migration to Britain in *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* (2004) as a persistent phenomenon from the Normans to contemporary immigration. Both Panayi and Winder argued that while white Britons reacted with hostility to waves of migration, migrants have always become absorbed into British society with time. Most of this work offers historical perspectives on social and political issues of the present, but does not engage further in interdisciplinary debates concerning migration, racism and ethnicity. In *Multicultural Racism*, Panikos Panayi stated 'I have utilized racism in order to describe reactions to a variety of migrants over a long period of time.' (2010, p. 204). In an edited book about 'racial violence' in Britain, he claimed there was an 'ever-present xenophobia in British society' (Panayi, 1993, p. ix), without clarifying the difference between prejudice, xenophobia and racism. In the same publication, Don MacRaild explains violence against Irish Catholics in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Cumberland as drawing on 'the innate British dislike of Catholicism' (1993, p. 54). Kathleen Paul's research on Government-level debates about, and classifications of, Commonwealth subjects illuminated the role of policy makers and political debates in the



shaping of public discourse on migration. Paul argues that responsibility for hostile responses to migrants lay in politicians' framing of Commonwealth migrants as a problem (1997). Kushner has further asserted the aim of academic work on prejudice to 'never be remote from the daily problems that racism causes for those under attack' (1999, p. 4).

Marxian approaches on the other hand have explored the links between class and race in the experiences of migrants and minorities in Britain against the backdrop of imperial histories. Ron Ramdin's *The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain* puts forward a Marxist perspective on the exploitation of colonial subjects and the continuing exploitation of British citizens from the Colonies and focuses on the role of black activists in working-class movements – neglected by other historians of the working class (Ramdin, 1987). Laura Tabili, too, examines the struggles of colonised and British workers in the context of social and economic power relations in the imperial system (1994). Both Ramdin and Tabili use working-class history as a context and tradition to examine wider power structures. Their approach has similarities to that of the New Imperial History, which has a more culturalist, less materialist, analysis.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, pioneering work in New Imperial History by Catherine Hall and Antoinette Burton has put Britain's minority history in a new context, moving it from the margins of national and imperial histories to the centre. The histories, notably Catherine Hall's *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English imagination, 1830-1867* (2002) and Antoinette Burton's *After the imperial turn: thinking with and through the nation* (2003), put metropole and colony into the same analytical field and explored the impact of empire 'at home' in Britain, whether by missionary connections and religious networks or through the presence of colonised peoples in the metropole (Hall, 2002; Hall and Rose, 2006). They explore the role of the empire in fundamentally linking the experiences of imperial subjects.

Questions of the construction of British and/or English identity in relation to racialised others are also an important feature of the historical scholarship. Tony Kushner has written extensively on Anglo-Jewry, antisemitism, refugees, and on the construction of Britishness and exclusionary discourses, always with a critical focus on notions of outsiders and insiders (e.g. 1993, 2012). For example, with reference to 1947 antisemitic riots in Britain, Tony Kushner highlights that the Jews of Britain 'despite their contributions to the country and the massive efforts at Anglicisation were *seen to be foreigners* at this point in time.' (1993, p. 153). He however has also deplored the absence of exchange between historical migration studies and postcolonial studies (2012). More critical approaches in migration studies are beginning to emerge, with for example, Paul Ward's *Britishness since 1870* discussion of issues of ethnicity, class and gender in the making of British identity (2004). Caroline Bressey, a human geographer, has written historical works that focus on the Black presence in Victorian and Edwardian Britain and her work

engages in questions around gender and contemporary identity (2010). These historical works engage in debates of a political nature and explore cultural politics, questioning the relationship between how minorities are represented and the role they have played, and continue to play, in the formation of British society, past and present.

As in any historical research, relying on historical archival material holds challenges. The official record is a widely debated issue for the investigation of all history, with specific challenges for the writing of both ethnic minority and gender history. Definitions in documentary evidence used by British researchers on minority histories are far from straightforward, with terms like 'coloured' and 'black' being used to describe Africans, West Indians and Asians (Visram, 2002, p. ix). Places of birth of British residents was first recorded in the British census of 1841 (Neal, 2009). Individuals from the British colonies often remain invisible in the archive, as there was no consistency in when skin colour was recorded. In the 1881 census, recorders wrote racialised comments in certain instances – then, black men and women become 'temporarily visible', in other cases, skin colour will have gone unrecorded (Bressey, 2010, p. 164). The 1991 UK census was the first that included a question on ethnicity (Klug, 1999). Joan Scott's argument that feminist history needs to challenge research categories as well as 'scrutinize(s) methods of analysis' (Scott, 1999, p. 42) is highly relevant. Academics have argued that sources tell as much about the frame of mind of the person recording, as about the thing they were recording. Historians thus have to be aware of the role the documenter plays in the writing of events (Davis, 1987).

Migration historians also warn that the historical record not only has gaps, but is also heavily biased, giving an understanding of migrants' lives from the perspective of state agencies, such as the police, which can result in what Tony Kushner labels a 'pathological approach to the minority experience' (Kushner, 2001, p. 81). Kushner highlights historians' responsibility in questioning the historical record available, especially in being aware of its omissions (2001). He calls on historians to reflect on how the records that are available impact on the histories written (2001). Jonathan Elukin has argued that history-writing that relies too heavily on negative elements of inter-ethnic relations 'may thus be giving us a distorted vision of the total experiences of medieval Jews' (2007, p. 9). Kushner himself calls on historians to rethink the structures of history-making and critically investigate absences (2006). Becky Taylor highlights that the examination of migrant and ethnic minority perspectives and experiences is especially difficult, considering the reliance on specific types of documentary evidence in academic history (2010). Scholars have argued that for migration to become fully established as part of historical research and accounts, historical methods and sources need to diversify, with oral testimonies, for example, becoming more important (Panayi and Burrell, 2006; Taylor, 2010).

The writing of history concerning minorities exemplifies some of the limitations of traditional historical methods. Academics have aimed at filling the gaps in knowledge about migration and racialised groups. Some have further highlighted the challenges of academic history in making knowledge about migration and minority pasts and aimed to develop historical methods to enable the telling of wider histories. This is particularly relevant in enquiring into the effects of the biased nature of wider historical knowledge – that is, who can be researched and understood as an historical actor, based on the available record, and the effects this has on a diverse and unequal society in the present.

### **2.3. Museum perspectives**

Museums are analysed in the academic literature as one of the major public institutions that shape societies' historical understanding. They are considered as part of the set of institutions that mediate collective cultural memory through selective practices (Erell, 2010, p. 5). Scholars have discussed the role of museums in creating discourses and shaping narratives that frame reference points for how the past and the present are understood and analysed (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Bennett, 1995). Laurence Gouriévidis sees 'museums as spaces of authority that confer legitimacy on and endorse selected versions of the past' (Gouriévidis, 2014, p. 13). The power of institutions to legitimise knowledge is a concern for many thinkers (Spivak, 1997; Collins, 1991; Naidoo, 2016). They ask what knowledge is valued as expert and how institutions confer expertise and authority.

The foundational theorist Tony Bennett, for example, analyses the development of museums in relation to other cultural institutions, applying a Foucauldian analysis not to the museum itself, but to the framework around it. He points out how culture functions as a tool to generate norms of behaviour, with institutions like museums being used to inculcate visitors with ideas of progress and self-improvement (Bennett, 1995). The cultural theorist Aleida Assmann argues that through active and passive processes of remembering and forgetting, public institutions shape understandings of the past and its meaning (Assmann, 2011a).

Collecting – the storage and physical protection of remains – is one of the key functions of museums, and analysed by Assmann as one of the passive processes through which societies remember (Assmann, 2011b). Museums thus select and hold 'material evidence, objects and specimens, of the human and natural history of our planet' (Pearce, 1993, p. 1). Lidchi argues that museums use objects to show direct links with the past (Lidchi, 1997, p. 162). The selection of material is analysed as giving a view on the background of collection practices through time, with the museum's 'stratified accumulation of collections' being a '(very) physical expression' of the biased nature of social knowledge (Pearce, 1993, p. 117). What is in a museum is deemed important enough to not be forgotten, to be

protected from passive processes of neglect and loss of remains, as well as active destruction (Assmann, 2011b).

Several researchers have investigated museums as involved in active processes of remembering through the exhibition and circulation of remains of the past. This process of remembering functions as a canon (Assmann, 2011b). Researchers have enquired into the role exhibitions play within certain discursive formations – labelled the ‘politics of exhibiting’ (Lidchi, 1997, p. 153). Drawing on Stuart Hall’s concept of representation, this analyses discursive formations and language structures – ways of ordering and categorising – as involved in the shaping of signs – constructed representations rather than reflections of real phenomena or objects (Hall, 1997; Lidchi, 1997). ‘Representation’ is understood here as the way reality is given meaning through text and language, with categories also organising and structuring *thinking* (Hall, 1997, p. 18). Hall is also foundational in understanding the process of mediation in culture. In this process, meaning is encoded in text through which producers communicate a ‘preferred’ reading, which can be either accepted or read against in its ‘decoding’ by the recipient (Hall, 1980, p. 135). Museums and their displays are thus proposing ways of ‘seeing the world’ (Macdonald, 1996, p.14). This has a wider public role in society, as museums frame perceptions of importance and of value (Pearce, 1993, p. 88). Eilean Hooper-Greenhill uses the way museums have arranged and classed objects in the past to critically enquire into the present order and its supposed neutrality (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). She asserts that taxonomies and the organisation of collections and displays are not natural or neutral, but enable and disable certain ways of knowing (1992).

The role of exhibitions in structuring knowledge and asserting value is strongly linked to the educational function of museums. The role of museums as educators goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Pearce, 1992, p. 3), and Hooper-Greenhill interrogates the present-day set-up of the museum as institutionalising modern Western Enlightenment systems of knowledge. Her analysis focuses on the ways museums have formed societies’ relationships with the past and actively created an enlightenment narrative of progress, which establishes the neutrality and rationality of the present (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Bennett, 1995). More recently, however, scholars have also investigated the potential for museums to enable critical historical understanding. Whitehead *et al.* argue that in museums, the idea of a neutral present could be contested which could contribute to the ‘denaturalization of political orders ... opening up vistas onto the *possibility* of alternatives’ (Whitehead *et al.*, 2015, p. 47). Jenny Kidd argues that museums can be places of disruption, where historical narratives are challenged and the making of history is shown as contested (Kidd, 2014). Viv Golding proposes the role of museums as fostering dialogue and critical reflection ‘on the ways the past impacts on the present and future’ (2014, p. 19).

At the same time, museums are also researched as political places that authorise societal 'culture, history, and identity' (Onciul, 2013, p. 81) and national self-representations (Duncan, 1995; Sutherland, 2014). They function within a wider framework of heritage representations, such as public monuments and buildings, that shape national self-images (Smith, 2006; Hall, 2005). Museums thus curate historical narratives to negotiate (national) identities (Hintermann and Johansson, 2010, p.7). In this sense, they contribute to national imaginaries, or what Benedict Anderson terms 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983).

Several researchers have investigated the positioning of historical representations in relation to present individuals. A visitor to an historical or heritage display, just like a historian writing a text, positions themselves in relation to a network of events, connections and causations (Phillips, 2004; Johnson, 2012). Mark Salber Phillips argues that any representation of the past constructs a sense of distance or proximity between the present and the past event. He proposes that apart from the straightforward temporal distance between past and present, there are several forms of distance. Representations can create emotional or affective proximity between the visitor and reader in the present. They can cause empathy with the experiences of people in the past, perhaps making action to redress injustices more pressing (Whitehead *et al.*, 2016). Representations can also provide information, which creates emotional distance, but enables cognitive understanding – 'perhaps to emphasize the objectivity, irony or philosophical sweep of the historian's eye' (Phillips, 2004, p. 96). Phillips argues that there is 'no fixed stance, either of detachment or proximity, that is best suited for all contexts' (Phillips, 2004, p. 95), and historical and museum narratives navigate the positioning according to specific situations. This question of distance and proximity is important for an analysis of individuals' relationship with diverse pasts – it shows that there are several layers of engagement, with emotional proximity, for example, not necessarily inhibiting the ability to analyse intellectually.

Some scholars have investigated these effects from visitors' and pupils' points of view. Drawing on the concept of historical consciousness – 'consciousness of one's own historical narrative' – as essential to the understanding of history, Collin *et al.* investigate how visitors negotiate their own narratives in relation to museum displays about the past. Drawing on their research into how visitors situate themselves in relation to time and their own 'reference group', they argue that museums can either utilise historical consciousness critically to enable visitors' engagement in social and political debates, or they can use it to 'impose particular views' (Collin *et al.*, 2016). Zanzanian, investigating historical learning in schools, shows how the framing of past actors influences the negotiation of encounters with difference in the present. He argues that an understanding of change, historical agency and the varied nature of inter-group relations could

‘restructure group boundaries in a more inclusive way’. His research suggests that willingness to consider ‘change’ as a central historical factor, impacts on the strengthening or disrupting of group boundaries (Zanazanian, 2012).

Museologists have increasingly studied the way museum practices can foster social equality and justice by shaping public opinion in favour of progressive change, conceiving of the ‘New Museum’ as a place for social justice (Sandell, 2002; Sandell and Nightingale, 2012; Lynch, 2013; Smith, Cubitt, Fouseki, Wilson, 2011). Sandell argues that museums can and should actively shape moral positions, specifically drawing on ‘cosmopolitan (universalist) understandings of human rights’ (Sandell, 2012, p. 212). Such approaches aim to use objects from the past to forward certain ideas about the present and the future. Many memorial museums, which deal with past injustices and genocide, link their work to present political, social and ethical issues (Williams, 2008; Duffy, 2004).

The shift in museology towards social justice has also seen a shift from exhibit and collection orientations to people and a new conceptualisation of curators as facilitators. The authoritative role of the museum and its staff is thereby called into question, and a shift is made to collaboration and engagement (Fouseki, 2010; Witcomb, 2003; Morse *et al.*, 2013). This practice could give voice to those previously excluded and act as a tool for empowerment (Fouseki, 2010; Witcomb, 2003). The museum’s role in this process is to facilitate communication through the provision of space, resources and advice (Morse *et al.*, 2013, p. 101), while members of staff acting as facilitators have to be transparent about their agenda (Morse *et al.*, 2013, p. 102).

The rethinking associated with the ‘New Museum’ and the desire to promote social justice is also linked to aims to ‘democratise’ museums (Sandell, 2002). This reconceptualisation has led museums to explore their relationships with those outside the museum, especially to those traditionally excluded from those institutions. James Clifford’s foundational concept of museums as a ‘contact zone’ was developed to consider museum practitioners’ work with indigenous communities and collections as political, historical and disruptive relationships on the basis of enduring power imbalances (1999). He also questions how community ‘experience’ and curatorial ‘authority’ can be negotiated (1999, p. 449). Onciul references this concept in her development of the idea of ‘engagement zones’ as unpredictable spaces that may result in a variety of products, such as ‘exhibits, programming, community employment, collection loans, repatriations, community participation on museum panels, and changes to museum practice and ethos’ (Onciul, 2013, p. 79).

Many museum professionals and theorists now perceive museums as places for the community, which have a duty to represent and be accountable to a wider audience, rather than a select few (Watson, 2007; Crooke, 2007). Watson defines ‘community’ through a sense of belonging that its members feel, arguing that association with a

'community' plays a role in the making of identity (Watson 2007, p.3). She stresses the fluid borders defining communities, and the fact that one individual is a member of several non-fixed communities. Communities are thus not seen as homogeneous, or static or well-defined, but 'porous, multifaceted, ever-shifting, loosely connected groups of people' (Onciul, 2013, p. 81). hooks argues that a homogenising dynamic is sometimes sustained from within groups, and proposes that rather than focusing on consensus and unity, groups should challenge dominant discourses within their communities, with diversity and dissent being essential for progressive politics (hooks, 1994). Whitehead *et al.* argue that the shift to people and communities can make curators more sensitive to diverse audiences, and hope that they take the opportunity to discuss contemporary, sometimes controversial, themes (Whitehead *et al.*, 2015). Onciul sees the potential benefits of community participation in sharing knowledge, offering 'alternative narratives, new perspectives, and voices to be heard within museums' (Onciul, 2013, p. 93). These can also give 'cultural representations greater integrity and validity' (*ibid.*, p. 92).

Critics see engagement and participation as holding positive and negative potential (Onciul, 2013; Lynch and Alberti, 2010; Lynch, 2013). Conflicts in museum-community collaborations, examined by Lynch and Alberti, are especially relevant to the multiplicity of historical narratives. Research has highlighted arising conflict when museums attempt a consensus depiction, which aims to eradicate disagreement (Lynch, 2013). Lynch proposes that museums need to be open to debate and transparent about conflict within and without, in order not to undermine their own social justice efforts. Lynch and Alberti detail difficulties and conflict emerging from continuing institutional racism, but argue that rather than striving for a forced consensus, conflict could be used dynamically, drawing on Mouffe's idea of agonistic democracy (2010; Mouffe, 2000). This concept sees democratic exchanges as perpetually in conflict, and as opposed to liberal conceptions does not hold it possible to resolve these. There is thus no end point to political debate, which brings consent and the final outcomes. For museums, Lynch and Alberti use this idea to propose a forum, where museums professionals and collaborators interact on an equal footing in a 'community of interpretation' (Lynch and Alberti, 2010, p. 19). Other researchers have highlighted that in collaborations, the last word, and therefore the last instance of decision-making, mostly rests with the museum curators rather than the community collaborators (Fouseki, 2010). This means power structures are reproduced and left unchallenged. Lynch has problematised approaches to collaboration that force consensus and strengthen a triumphalist liberal self-image of the institution (Lynch, 2014). Furthermore, Fouseki has shown that community participants are often under pressure to act as community representatives, while many feel uncomfortable when they are expected to speak for others (Fouseki, 2010, p. 181). Onciul highlights that the practice of museum engagement has effects on communities, with the engagement process impacting on the

constant negotiation in 'intercommunity work' (Onciul, 2013, p. 79). Museums' collaborations with 'community groups' are thus not simply contributing to greater social justice, but also bring tensions into greater focus.

At the same time, curation and facilitation are influenced by wider institutional and societal contexts. Onciul has highlighted the context within which the participation occurs and the 'museum's willingness to change' as key to understanding its success or failure (Onciul, 2013, 94). Ramírez argues that the role of the curator as a cultural broker is 'restricted by the interests of larger or more powerful groups and constituencies', resulting in a new focus on difference and particularity – 'another form of cultural colonialism' (Ramírez, 1996, p. 22).

Museums scholars have highlighted the role of museums as authoritative institutions of knowledge-making about the past, while also indicating new approaches to the widening of viewpoints within museums. These are important investigations in understanding the museum perspective on knowledge-making, the different constituencies at play in this process, as well as ongoing tensions in museums' relationships with those outside.

## **2.4. Migration in museums**

Analysis of museums' power to shape and legitimise public understandings of the past through collections, displays and interpretation practices, has opened up investigation into how this power is used to include or 'erect boundaries exclusive of "others"' (Gouriévidis, 2014, p. 4). Museum scholars examine the ways museums have portrayed migration and minority histories, and how museums position migrants within societal historical narratives (Hintermann and Johansson, 2010). Van Geert highlights the fact that migration history remains marginalised and is not included in national museums and cultural centres (2014, p. 209). Its display in temporary exhibitions implicitly sends the 'message that these are not stories of general national significance' (Ang, 2009, p. 21). Johansson and Hintermann analyse migration displays in museums that offer an 'enhancement narrative', where migrants make small additions to the host country, but leave its overall nature unchanged (2010). In these immigration exhibitions, communities and their contribution to a locality are portrayed separately from the 'mainstream' (de Wildt, 2015; Ross, 2015).

The focus on 'audience development' – the desire to attract new types of visitors to museums – in the making of these displays has also been explored in the literature. Several researchers have argued that physical and cultural barriers have to be removed to make museums more accessible to those who have not traditionally visited them, and many museums have made attempts at diversifying their audiences (Hooper-Greenhill, 1997; Black, 2005; Ang, 2019). Often, migration displays have been used by museums to



target specific groups by presenting their 'own' history (de Wildt, 2015, p. 230). Ien Ang, however, has pointed out the limitations of targeting 'groups' through special exhibitions that are thought as of specific interest (Ang, 2019, p. 324). She argues that these attempts further marginalise social and ethnic groups that do not traditionally visit museums. It places those groups outside of the national mainstream as it implies that 'normal' exhibitions are not for them, entrenching the divide between those who museums are for and those for whom it is only on a 'rare special occasion' (ibid., p. 324).

The shift toward the visitor-led museum (Liddiard, 2004, p. 18; McPherson, 2006) has also been analysed as a privatisation of tastes, where visitors are conceptualised as consumers, who are sold products. In the need to deliver to audiences, museums compete with other leisure activities and develop economic strategies. McPherson argues that this focus on pleasure accentuates the private over any public or civic role of museums (McPherson, 2006, p. 49). This conception of visitors as private consumers is especially relevant in a neoliberal context where British cultural policy has since the 1980s conceptualised arts and culture as industries (Stevenson *et al*, 2010; Loosely, 2011). As well as several intersecting constituencies such as regions, ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups that play a role in British cultural policy, arts and culture are at the same time inextricably connected to their role in the market, their profitability and use (Looseley, 2011). Museums' approaches to audiences and the selling of specific displays to select audiences thus potentially fragments and privatises visitor groups.

Another problem of targeting, it has been argued, is the homogenisation of minority groups. Ang highlights that the issues chosen by museums to draw in specific ethnic or religious groups risk homogenising ethnic identities by prescribing what is of interest to them (2019, p. 325). Whitehead *et al*. have also discussed problems arising from the representation of identities in museums, where collective identities are asserted and conferred. They argue that a mismatch between what is represented and how visitors experience identity results in 'representational violence' (Whitehead *et al*., 2015, p. 10). Whitehead *et al* also show that displays rarely explain how 'shared character traits' developed, ending up naturalising collective identities (Whitehead *et al*., 2015, p. 9). An alternative approach is suggested by an exhibition on the migration history of Copenhagen described by Jakob Parby. This, he suggests, shows that there are opportunities to move away from separate marginalised stories, towards more historicised fluid identities, which implicate visitors in the stories, by creating a 'sense of "we are all immigrants"' (2015, p. 133).

Museum displays of celebratory accounts of migration and multicultural diversity have been criticised for neglecting questions about difference, inequality and racism (Van Geert, 2014, p. 206; Ang, 2009). Ang criticises multicultural displays as erasing substantive differences, and depoliticising issues of diversity (2009). Trofanenko criticises

as overly celebratory a display which portrays Canada as a welcoming nation, without discussing issues of race (Trofanenko, 2016, p. 82). The exhibition she examines suggests that any successes of the past are the result of individuals' hard work and dedication, without discussing economic, social or political contexts (2016, p. 85). Whitehead *et al.* have criticised the disconnect between positive representations of diversity in museums and minority groups' actual experiences of racism in society (Whitehead *et al.*, 2015, p. 32). Moreover, Johansson and Hintermann have analysed museums' tendency to place representations of racism in the past, rather than the present, implying a 'move in the right direction' (2010, p. 141).

While these critiques emphasise the failure to create a connection between past and present experiences, policies, contexts and inequalities (Trofanenko, 2016, p. 85), Ruth Abram provides an example of a museum that does connect the past to contemporary issues. She discusses the Tenement Museum of the Lower East Side of New York's attempt to get visitors to reflect on contemporary problems. This museum puts historical sources to practical use in the present. Aware that focusing on injustices in the past might disconnect people from injustice and inequality in the present, the museum organised programmes that used historical sources to address current problems, by training visitors in housing regulations and using written sources from past immigrants to teach English to new migrants to New York (Abram, 2002). A number of other scholars too have explored the wider implication of museums in networks of injustice. Naidoo proposes that the focus on diversity and inclusion in cultural institutions and museums is in fact poorly disguised oppression, which still relies on the opposition between white insiders who *allow* non-white outsiders to participate (Naidoo, 2005). This acknowledges continuing power relations within the production of heritage as the background condition for the representation of new discourses and the staging of interventions (Naidoo, 2016; Lynch, 2013; Littler, 2005).

Discussions of the role of museums in relation to social exclusion and museums' relations with ethnic minorities often cite the concept of recognition (Gouriévidis, 2014, p. 15). While museum theorists and professionals propose museums as a forum for diverse stories to be represented and publicly engaged with, they also stress that public spaces are not neutral arenas. They draw on political philosopher Nancy Fraser, who points towards the 'dismantling [of] institutionalised obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction' (in Smith, Fouseki, 2011, p. 101). Fraser defines misrecognition as 'status subordination', stemming from 'institutionalized patterns of cultural value' (2003, p. 29). These patterns confer recognition to some, while misrecognising others, thus subordinating them and strengthening those in positions of power. This is complemented by Sandell (1998) who frames museums' responsibility to represent minority groups' histories in a two-fold manner. Firstly, by not including these

histories in displays, a museum denies access to their service, and secondly it 'also exacerbates their position of exclusion by broadcasting an exclusive image reinforcing the prejudices and discriminatory practices of museum users and the wider society' (Sandell, 1998, p. 408). This critique sees museum representations as potentially having an active role in reproducing injustice.

While many heritage and museum scholars draw on Nancy Fraser to discuss recognition and museums as places of social justice, she herself argues that actions against misrecognition have to be coupled and analysed in concurrence with actions against maldistribution, and these efforts have to be weighed against each other (2013). Unless a society redresses *both* maldistribution and misrecognition, she argues, it cannot function democratically. Rose Kinsley has explored the implications of Nancy Fraser's concept of recognition, also bringing in Fraser's focus on distribution – ignored completely in other parts of museum and heritage studies. Kinsley analyses celebratory cultural representations in museums as affirmative rather than transformative responses to issues of misrecognition. She argues that, while they celebrate a group and might alleviate their position in society, they do not challenge underlying structures of valuing (2016). She proposes that a dual approach to misrecognition and maldistribution would include both affirmative and transformative measures: for example, the removal of entry fees to museums and the representation of ethnic minorities amongst museum staff in order to address maldistribution; and the celebration of diverse cultural holidays and the involvement of 'community advisory committees' in museums' exhibition planning to address misrecognition (2016).

While Fraser sees fights for economic justice as distinct, if not less important, from fights for cultural justice and recognition (Fraser, 2013), others argue for the intrinsically connected nature of material and cultural power (Butler, 1997; Young, 1997). Hall foregrounds culture as a tool to legitimise social hierarchies (Hall, 2005; 2013), analysing the societal structures behind the valorisation and legitimisation of certain forms of cultural expression, and the de-legitimation of others. Young argues that most fights for recognition, framed by Fraser as purely symbolic, or 'merely cultural', to use Butler's phrase, have in fact to be understood as addressing a multiplicity of oppressive structures, including economic and labour distribution (1997; Butler, 1997). Young proposes a framework that distinguishes five faces of oppression – exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence – that are nevertheless linked (1990). Combatting types of oppression requires the challenging of the structural system that upholds all of them. So while Fraser and Young disagree about the relation between cultural and economic power, they agree about the need to transform the structural basis of society in order to facilitate more equal social conditions (Young, 1990; Fraser and Honneth, 2003).

This analysis highlights the long-term structures at the basis of social relations. Drawing on a structural conception of history, Alasia Nuti's discussion of the continuation and indeed reproduction of historical injustices are relevant to museums. She argues that as societies change, injustices occur and are reproduced in new forms. Nuti also highlights that many 'current formal and informal institutions that regulate our societies' have been formed in connection with historical injustices (Nuti, 2016, p. 15). Her example is the connection in the US between the establishment of prisons and the institution of slavery. She asserts that 'our present institutions may have been (more or less consciously) developed and shaped in ways that precisely perpetuate' past injustices (Nuti, 2016, p. 16). A structural understanding does not mean that structures preclude action or determine actions, but that agency is located within a complex system of power relationships, which one individual does not have complete control over (Hayward and Lukes, 2008). Depending on where an individual is situated within society, they may have more or less power to impact on their own life path and their surroundings (Phillips, 1991, p. 154). These analyses of societal institutions as implicated in reproducing historical injustices can serve to caution, but also support, museums' attempts at their transformation into places of social justice.

Museum studies has thus discussed wide-ranging issues and elucidated the role of the museum as collector and educator and its constitutive function in shaping national identities. Issues of power have taken centre stage, which has led to critical enquiries into museums' role in social hierarchies. The move towards social justice and participation has been accompanied by critical analysis of museums' authority and their relationship to historically excluded groups. Moves to remedy these exclusions have fostered positive attempts at community empowerment. Lasting transformation has, however, not yet occurred, and scholars have investigated the continuation of exclusionary and marginalising practices and structures. Further, a review of political theory literature on recognition has highlighted the need to examine cultural expressions and museums as implicated into wider, deeply unequal, hierarchies.

## **2.5. Heritage and bottom-up perspectives**

The study of heritage is primarily concerned with the phenomenon and its construction in the present, and as Graham and Howard state: 'The study of heritage does not involve a direct engagement with the study of the past' (Graham and Howard, 2008, p. 2). François Hartog analyses heritage as assimilating the past to the present. He claims that it is only concerned with the present, and part of the regime he calls 'presentism' (2015).

Some scholars, such as David Lowenthal, define heritage as people having 'ownership' of the past (1998; Ashworth et al, 2007; Robertson, 2008). This treats heritage as a finite resource, which is claimed and distributed competitively – an individual possession, which one person owns at someone else's expense. Others, however, affirm that heritage is a construct, which is open to negotiation and exchange between different interpretations (Littler, 2008; Rothberg, 2009; Smith, 2006). This view of heritage sees it as an interconnected and open process, which is continually re-evaluated, debated and changed (Littler, 2005; Rothberg, 2009), with people and institutions making and performing connections with the past and conferring meaning and value onto the past (Smith, 2006; 2012; 2016). Heritage thus does not create dis-inheritance, as groups do not compete for finite resources, but are engaged in discourses and claims (Ashley, 2016). This moves away from understandings of heritage as material traces from the past. This constructionist approach is widely shared amongst contemporary heritage scholars (Graham and Howard, 2008; Smith, 2006). Importantly, this process is heavily impacted by power relations within society.

Laurajane Smith conceptualises the social and political context of personal and societal heritage-making through the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD), a hegemonic discourse that makes certain sites valuable as heritage (2006). Smith argues that the value of heritage is not intrinsic; it is produced in a discourse. Heritage, rather than naturally existing in buildings or sites, is a status conferred on them through heritage practices. Discursive practices around objects and sites thus signify and create their meaning and value (Smith, 2006). Susan Ashley defines heritagisation as a 'process that places value upon places, people, things, practices, histories or ideas as an inheritance from the past', which 'marks things or practices from the past as important' (Ashley, 2014, p. 39f). The field of Critical Heritage Studies draws attention to the processes that actively create the meaning and value of remains of the past, the role of institutions as well as communities and individuals in this process. It investigates heritage as a source to claim power and authority, that can also be used critically and in contestation (Smith, 2012). Smith's research laid the basis for a field of study focusing on alternative and subaltern uses of the past (Smith, 2012; Harrison, 2013).

Jan Assmann theorises everyday memorial experiences and practices. He argues that societies' 'communicative memories' are sustained in everyday interaction amongst contemporaries, and across generations. This communicative memory does not function through specialists and institutions, but through informal transfers, and is acquired by individuals along with language and social competence (Assmann, 2010). The Popular Memory Group argue that every member of society plays a role in the 'social production of memory', though unequally (Popular Memory Group, 1998). They use popular memory as a term which encompasses academic history, dominant public history institutions and

individual and group memories – ‘all the ways in which a sense of the past is constructed in our society’ (Popular Memory Group, 1998, p. 76). The group draws on oral history as a discipline, which unearths personal relations between past and present. They investigate the societal context that shapes personal engagements with the past in people’s everyday lives. Maurice Halbwachs uses the concept of ‘collective memory’ to describe how memory works as a social concept beyond the individual (Halbwachs, 1992). Pierre Nora in his *Lieux de Mémoire* explores the ways the past is present in the existing intellectual landscape, such as in monuments, museums, archives, symbols, slogans or memorial plaques. These are ways in which the past is kept in memory as it is deemed important or valuable by a collective or community (Nora, 1989).

Relations to the past are complex and dependent on personal and social association. Olick highlights that mnemonic practices, such as reminiscence and commemoration, and products, such as images or records, are ‘always simultaneously individual and social’ and influenced by representations that are publicly available, that are facilitated by cultural structures and through social interaction in closer groups (Olick, 2010, p. 158). Social psychologist Kenneth Gergen also stresses the social aspect of personal relations with the past. He studies the ways people tell narratives about themselves and how these construct relationships between past and present, giving direction to people’s lives. He argues that these narratives emerge in interchange with social life around them, and follow social conventions and expectations (Gergen, 1994). Self-narratives are continually subject to dialogic processes of interchange, rather than stable and monologic. The ways in which ‘social groups construct a shared past’ (Erll, 2010, p. 5), traditions and memory, play an important role in societal history and heritage representations, which serve as the context in which individuals engage and encounter the past in the present.

The concept of intangible heritage aims to encompass stories that are told and passed down, traditions and practices, dances, customs and rituals (Harrison, 2013; Smith and Akagawa, 2009). While the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization) has passed recommendations for the safeguarding of tangible, as well as intangible heritage, scholarly debates on the nature of intangible cultural heritage have evolved. Denis Byrne highlights the importance of use and practice for these types of heritage. He argues that the everyday aspect of the human past and present is not captured by listings, such as UNESCO conventions, that focus on the exceptional (Byrne, 2009). Others criticise the UNESCO heritage conventions for not reflecting how heritage is *made*, and how the tangible and the intangible are interrelated (Smith, 2006; Byrne, 2009). Richard Kurin argues that culture risks becoming frozen in intangible heritage discourse and in attempts at safeguarding (Kurin, 2004, p. 74). The ensuing objectification neglects the time-bound aspect of culture (Arizpe, 2004, p. 131). For example, Rodney Harrison argues for an interrelated understanding of natural and cultural, which he sees

as arbitrary distinctions (Harrison, 2013). Christina Kreps has argued that not just *what* counts as heritage, but also *how* this heritage is curated forms part of intangible cultural practices (Kreps, 2009) which organise the 'frameworks that support the transmission of culture through time' (Kreps, 2009, p. 194). Kurin has highlighted that exclusionary or inequitable traditions are disregarded in intangible heritage policies that are 'quite idealistic, seeing culture as generally hopeful and positive' (Kurin, 2004, p. 70).

This points to the diverse ways in which the past functions within people's day to day lives – in memories, stories, traditions, customs and everyday social practices (Macdonald, 2013; Robertson, 2012). Sharon Macdonald argues that memories do not happen in an isolated way, 'in the head', they are 'distributed in practices, materials, bodies and interactions with others' (Macdonald, 2013, p. 106). Iain Robertson sees performance and performed repetitions as key to the way in which people articulate and construct connections with the past (2012, p. 17). Macdonald researches the omnipresence of the past as 'materialised in bodies, things, buildings and places' (Macdonald, 2013, p. 79), analysing engagements and practices as 'past presencing' (Macdonald, 2013, p. 16). Jerome De Groot studies popular culture as an important field to understand people's relations with the past (2009). He explores different media used to engage with the past in society, such as adverts, television contests or campaigns, films, children's books, but also how people actively shape their histories through local history groups, popular archaeology and genealogy. He argues that people's engagement with the past is in a constant state of contestation and flux (2009).

Developing research on emotions in heritage, Smith and Campbell argue that affect and emotion are 'essential constitutive elements of heritage making' (Smith and Campbell, 2016, p. 444). This lends insights into the different ways visitors make meaning at heritage sites. Smith and Campbell argue that emotion shapes relations to the past, and is even at play in supposedly neutral and value-free expert statements (Smith and Campbell, 2016). Emotions are here understood as constituted within a social, political and cultural context and discursively mediated (Wetherell *et al*, 2018; Wetherell, 2012). Scholars engaging with bottom-up perspectives on the importance of the past have also highlighted the importance of a connection with the past for personal well-being (Twells *et al*, 2018). The absence of this personal connection, or 'representational belonging', has been analysed as having severe negative affective impacts on those marginalised by public representations (Caswell *et al*, 2017). Emotional connections to the past are thus seen as not purely personal, but as situated within a societal framework impacted by unequal power relations.

Early engagement with the role of the past in society in the UK criticised heritage as sentimental and escapist. David Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country* enquires into the omnipresence of the past in the UK, through its material and immaterial vestiges, and

highlighted how these are passively and actively changed and altered in the present (1985). Hewison's *The Heritage Industry* investigates the rise and flourishing of the heritage industry in the 1980s, at a time when other industries were in decline. His book analyses the commercial aspect of 'heritage.' He argued that contemporary society was mourning the loss of a glorious past, trying to preserve as much as possible. The ever-present past thus loomed over the present, clouding it as well as obscuring possible paths to the future (Hewison, 1987). Wright analyses the preservation of material traces of the past as symptomatic of an unproductive and escapist longing for the past (Wright, 1985). These books link heritage to nostalgic, often nationalistic and sentimental portrayals of the past (Hewison, 1987; Lowenthal, 1985; Wright, 1985). These critiques of the role of the past in the present sparked enquiries into the uses of history and heritage, but were criticised for neglecting popular and radical engagements with the past (Samuel, 1994).

More recently, scholars have analysed how registers of emotional engagement interact with intellectual and critical understandings at heritage sites. While Pierre Nora argues that the past is mobilised in order to provide stability in an accelerated modern world (Nora, 2011), others do not see relations to the past as necessarily stabilising. Ray Cashman argues that material culture from the past can be a tool to compare past and present and evaluate modern changes. It can call into question modern teleologies and can help individuals find their place in the present (Cashman, 2006). In his research, nostalgia can be linked to a critique of modern individualism, where a feeling of loss of community exchange is a reaction to feelings of isolation. He argues that this feeling of loss does not have to lead to inaction, but may lead instead to critical engagement (Cashman, 2006). Others argue that nostalgia and affective forms of knowledge can work to build a consensus and a sense of a shared past but can also create a disruption between past and present, depending on the historical and social context (Gregory and Witcomb, 2007). Alexander Bonnett argues that relationships with the past, including a sense of loss, can be helpful for political organisation, on the left as well as the right of the political spectrum (2010). Svetlana Boym distinguishes between restorative and reflective nostalgia – the first a longing to keep up established traditions and restore the lost home and the second a dwelling on the longing, which emphasises the rupture and impossibility of return. Restorative nostalgia solidifies the present, while reflective nostalgia provides a constant challenge (2002).

Valorisations of the past have a variety of functions within societies. Laurajane Smith argues that the concept of the authorised discourse about heritage is used to produce and influence other categories, such as ideas of nationhood and belonging (Smith, 2006). In Patrick Wright's analysis, heritage is interrogated as everyday articulations of 'ideas of the national past.' (Wright, 1985, p. x). Eric Hobsbawm analyses the use of traditions in instilling 'certain values and norms of behaviour' (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 1). In the collection



of essays *The Invention of Tradition*, he offers an historical view on how traditions have been invented and ritualised to legitimise and cement group cohesion, power relations or value systems (1983). Through acts of 'social engineering,' traditions were designed for specific purposes, sometimes to consolidate communities, institutions or the "nation" (1983, p. 13). These uses of the past are highly selective and function through ideas of continuity with the past. This continuity serves to present communities as natural units and as 'rooted in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely human communities so "natural" as to require no definition other than self-assertion' (1983, p. 14).

A strong body of literature analyses 'ordinary' people's bottom-up engagements with the past. The historian Raphael Samuel's research is foundational in this regard, highlighting everyday and radical understandings and uses of the past. Samuel sees relations with the past as something people create themselves in complex ways, not something that is transmitted unto them. He argues for appreciation of the myriad ways non-academics form connections to the past and create historical knowledge 'those do-it-yourself retrieval projects, such as barrow-hunting in the sixteenth century or family reconstitution today, which give new directions to writing and research, and create new landscapes for the historically minded to explore' (Samuel, 1994, p. 5). He contends that 'the sense of the past, at any given point in time, is quite as much a matter of history as what happened in it ... the two are indivisible' (1994, p. 15). His research is concerned with the ways people conceive the importance of the past at any time, in the past or the present.

A variety of scholars explicitly draw on Samuel to investigate how 'ordinary' people shape and use their understandings (Kean and Ashton, 2009; Smith, 2006). These studies are interested in self-organised and maintained relations to the past (Cashman, 2006; Rosenzweig and Thelen, 1998; Robertson, 2012), as opposed to official or authorised representations. The historians Rosenzweig and Thelen's research shows everyday or bottom-up relations with the past, focusing on personal registers of experience. Their study *The Presence of the Past* analyses the ways people engage in the past in more or less intense ways. Rosenzweig and Thelen conclude that their respondents showed deep levels of engagement with the past. The connection respondents felt with the past was especially high when family or the personal past was involved – telling or listening to stories at family reunions, showing or taking personal photographs to pass on memories and knowledge to future generations (Rosenzweig and Thelen, 1998).

Oral historians examine popular narratives and research the complicated ways in which the past is used by a wide range of people in the present. Oral history has become a discipline that reflects on the use of narratives, on the relation between *what* is told and *why* it is told (Portelli, 1998). It investigates the ways personal stories, told in oral histories, are influenced by societal, often national, narratives and representations of the past (Thomson, 1998). The narratives that are told are thus understood not to give a direct

view on what happened in the past, but of what an event from the past means to the narrator. Memory, and the articulation of memories in oral histories, is here examined as an active process of reshaping and creation of meaning, rather than as passive storage. A narrative is understood as partial – subjective and unfinished (Portelli, 1998; Abrams, 2010).

Many researchers thus investigate ordinary people as active creators and negotiators of relations to the past, for example focusing on the use of heritage to build identities. Representations of cultural identity are seen not simply as imposed on people, but as accepted or consented to and thus involving agency (Dodd, 1999). Tim Edensor argues that the creation of a sense of identity happens in everyday practices throughout society. He adapts Michael Billig's concept of banal nationalism to argue that (national) identity is produced and reproduced in everyday processes, and often implicitly rather than consciously (Edensor, 2002). Macdonald proposes the concept of 'collected memory' as apt to capture diverse memorial practices, as this approach, as opposed to 'collective memory', does not prescribe how individuals attribute meaning to practices of past-presencing (2013, p. 15). Researchers highlight that heritage practices are used in the production of conforming as well as non-conforming identities, in resistance and contestation, as in the creation of alternative memorials (Robertson, 2008). Laurajane Smith investigates different ways people do 'heritage work' when visiting heritage places in England, arguing that many visitors mobilise the past to critically engage with the present. Her interviews with visitors to English stately homes as well as visitors to 'radical' or working class heritage sites show that, especially in the visits of the latter, a critical stance to the present is formed through the visit and the engagement in the events and experiences of people in the past (2006).

In terms of research on heritage and the making of community identities, researchers have often assumed that identity, heritage and the character of a community, were directly linked (Gentry, 2013, p. 515). Deacon and Smeets investigate how policies to increase communities' say in heritage planning can foster more authentic relations to the past (2013). Community ownership is, in this understanding, valued as a means to confirm authenticity (Chan, 2017). Robertson's comment that 'memorials are attempts to fix and record authentically what has transpired and offer that past to future generations and insiders' (Robertson, 2008, p. 153) prioritises communities and bottom-up heritage as credible knowledge-makers about relations with the past.

However, Waterton and Watson criticise the shallow and reified understanding of communities as the holders of tradition and heritage, that they claim is perpetuated by heritage practitioners, managers and scholars. This understanding, they state, holds that community heritage is 'inherently valuable', with communities as the natural 'owners' of

heritage (2011, p. 1). Skounti critically observes that community-based heritage agents conceive of their own cultural heritage markers as “‘authentic’, faithful manifestations of what they have always been’ (Skounti, 2009, p. 77). Crooke analyses the use of ‘community heritage’ as a ‘galvanizing force and legitimizing factor, which can justify actions and interests of the group’ (2010, p. 19). Other scholars have also criticised shallow understandings of ‘communities’, with unity within communities assumed as pre-existing (Waterton and Smith, 2010; Naidoo, 2005; Littler, 2008; Crooke, 2010; Perkin, 2010). Smith and Waterton argue that the concept of ‘community’, especially in heritage policy but also in academic writing, is often used to ‘other’ certain groups (2010). The collective of white middle-class heritage professionals is left unquestioned in these discourses. They become normalised, while those who do not conform are subordinated (Waterton and Smith, 2010, p. 11). This scholarship argues that much heritage consultation and collaboration helps to solidify and perpetuate preconceived differences and constricts diverse heritage representations. Expectations on marginalised groups have been explored in relation to oral history research. Cosson has argued that, when approached by heritage organisers, groups are often expected to discuss specific issues, reducing groups’ diverse experiences to stereotypes (Cosson, 2010).

The critical heritage studies approach to bottom-up heritage has been criticised as ‘epistemic populism’: as proposing that ‘what the People say is correct because it is they who say it’ (González-Ruibal *et al*, 2018, p. 509). González-Ruibal *et al*’s criticism completely neglects the attention scholars like Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton have given to the problematic uses of heritage (Waterton and Smith, 2010; Smith, 2018). However, Smith and Campbell’s response to the criticism simply attacks González-Ruibal *et al*. as elitist (2018), rather than clarifying what specific epistemological claims bottom-up approaches make.

Philosophers’ debates on questions of contestatory, bottom-up or critical approaches to knowledge-production can enlighten this conflict. They analyse the location of individuals within an unequal society and its impact on them as knowers – as producers of knowledge. The position of knowledge-makers at specific points within history and society has prompted epistemologists to argue that no dislocated and disinterested view from nowhere is possible (Code, 1998; Mills, 1998; Ramazanoğlu, 1993), a view shared by many critical heritage scholars (Smith, 2006; Robertson, 2008; Chan, 2017). Code criticises traditional epistemological models that universalise the knowledge of privileged subjects as the norm, showing how they use examples taken from the ‘experiences of a privileged group of people, then to be presented as paradigmatic for knowledge as such’ (Code, 1998, p. 127). Consequently, Code argues that ‘objectivity requires taking subjectivity into account’, in this way eschewing subjectivism (Code, 1998, p. 138). The

investedness of knowers in the knowledge they produce make it impossible to think of this process as apolitical (Code, 1998; Ramazanoğlu, 1993). Code therefore considers epistemology as connected to moral-political inquiry and of facts as not independent of values. Both facts *and* values are subject to ongoing critical debate within a knowledge community.

Further, these processes bear on issues of justice, as inequality in knowledge communities, specifically divergences in who is trusted, have been analysed as highly unequal. Miranda Fricker thus argues that testimonial injustice – the fact that the testimony of some members of an epistemic community are trusted less than others – is a type of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007). The other type of epistemic injustice that subordinated groups face is their disadvantaged role in making sense of their experiences as their groups have been excluded from creating the resources to create and circulate analyses of their experiences (Fricker, 2007). This type of injustice has previously been explored by Patricia Hill Collins, who has argued that disempowered groups, such as Black women, because of the suppression of their thought in society, have been less capable of making their standpoint known to themselves and others (1991, p. 26).

While heritage scholars discuss issues of class, intersectionality is hardly explored. Apart from a chapter by Laurajane Smith, heritage scholars have largely neglected the role of gender in heritage representations (Smith, 2008).

## **2.6. Marginalised and racialised groups in heritage**

Heritage scholarship stresses the political context in which migrant and minority ethnic communities engage with certain pasts. Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge investigate how existing structures in multicultural societies order groups' relationships with specific pasts. They assert that while heritage is always plural and dynamic, policy models shape societies' engagements with plural pasts. A 'melting pot' heritage model presents a society in which diverse identities and diverse pasts have come together, mixed and created a new and shared culture; groups' heritages are not separate anymore, but dissolved into a shared heritage. A 'salad bowl' model sees the mixing together of diverse, yet distinct heritages. The 'add-on' model privileges majority culture, while also supporting minority heritages as add-on supplements (Ashworth *et al*, 2007). Some scholars draw attention to minority heritage in its own right, analysing how minority groups' use of memories serve as ways to connect with experiences of migration and settlement and sustain a group's 'identity and cohesion' (Tomalin and Starkey, 2017, p. 166). Other researchers show the private ways in which those not represented in public narratives engage with and preserve

their heritage at home (Buciek and Juul, 2008), exemplifying private and memorial practices as a response to public neglect.

Several scholars have problematised the celebratory tendency of heritage discourses about minorities. Kevin Myers criticises policies that focus on celebration rather than on the analysis of structures of power: 'Too often the celebration of difference or the records of the achievements of particular immigrant groups have little or nothing to say about continuing economic and social inequalities' (Myers, 2006, p. 41; see also Hesse, 2000). Jo Littler similarly analyses the heritage narratives present in British representations of 'multiculturalism' and 'diversity'. She argues that the 'liberal myth of seamless progress', which presents society moving into a happier multicultural future derives from the Enlightenment myth of progress, that does not lend itself to an analysis of the present. Similarly, a multiculturalism driven by corporate and consumerist motivations 'simultaneously acts as a means to popularize, or disseminate, ideas about multiculturalism whilst perpetuating structural inequalities' (2008, p. 97). Both of these strategies tell positive stories which do not critically engage with underlying and historically shaped inequalities. Watson and Waterton note the 'inequitable imbalances between professionals and communities in relation to the control of resources and narratives' (2010), suggesting the relationship between economic and cultural power as an important context for the making of history and heritage. The link between economic and cultural factors is, however, seldom explored further in these studies.

Theorists, especially critical race theorists, expand this understanding of the situation of individuals and groups within relations of social, cultural and political power. Their theories add to an understanding of expressions of bottom-up knowledge about the past as not confined to specific groups, but situated within societal frameworks. They argue that individuals have distinct experiences because of their location within a societal structural framework. The expression of different identities is 'the effect of an enunciation of difference that constitutes hierarchies and asymmetries of power' (Scott, 1995, p. 5). Power relationships within society discriminate between identities, establishing the 'superiority or the typicality or the universality of some in terms of the inferiority or atypicality or particularity of others.' (Scott, 1995, p. 6). The social construction of 'race' and difference has an impact on how people were and are treated – to be a black woman in Britain, for example, is to share a 'common structural location' (Mirza, 1997). The historical and contemporary creation of difference between people, however empirically false the distinctions that this is built on, has a direct impact on 'people's beliefs, attitudes and behaviour, as well as socio-economic and political structures we establish' (Goulbourne, 1998, p. viii). The legal and race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw analysed the experiences of black women in terms of 'intersectionality'. She, and others, argue that differences cannot be *added*. Rather, axes of power shape differences that interact with

each other and make for distinct experiences (Crenshaw, 1991; see also Spelman, 2006). These theorists analyse social, cultural and political power as interconnected, as they are affected and interlinked with the same societal structures. Thus, cultural expressions of bottom-up knowledge about the past are not just situated within cultural hierarchies, and can impact on those, but also within political and material ones.

Scholars have debated the role of separate groups' heritages within wider society in differing ways, with some concern about parallelism or fragmentation. William Logan highlights the conflict between collective rights and individual rights (2008, p. 445) and criticises uses of cultural heritage that emphasise the 'recognition of "parallel stories" told by currently irreconcilable voices' (Logan, 2008, p. 449). He argues that in this understanding, the use of cultural heritage reinforces 'divisions in society and between societies' and suggests the adoption of a human rights discourse to create understandings of cultural heritage that 'seek to include elements meeting common acceptance or that are important to each of the components within overall society' (2008, p. 449). However, while some analyses only cursorily mention how communities' own heritage-making affects wider heritage and power structures, others draw on Smith to investigate the ways alternative discourses and engagements challenge the AHD (Authorised Heritage Discourse). This thus sees specific and sometimes separate heritage-making as implicitly or explicitly engaging with wider society. Ellen Hoobler, for example, links self-representation with decolonisation (2006). Mary Kenny investigates heritage-making as political, arguing that by putting forward their own interpretations and commemorations, 'groups challenge and redefine authoritative heritage and their "place" in the world' (Kenny, 2009, p. 152). Susan Ashley proposes an analysis that sees minority groups' heritage-making outside public institutions as making claims about these groups' status within society, 'publically asserting the values of an outside non-white minority in relation to the insider English' (2016, p. 564). She analyses minority groups' heritage activism as 'struggling for decolonization, recognition or other matters of concern, but also interacting purposefully to change the shape of society' (2016, p. 564). Heritage representations are analysed as claiming minority groups' status and legitimacy within wider society (Ashley, 2014, p. 50). Susan Ashley and Sybille Frank investigate the role of heritage-making 'outside' of official and public institutions, while questioning designations "insideness and "outsideness" within unequal relations of power' (Ashley and Frank, 2016, p. 503).

Littler and Naidoo also interrogate the possibility of a shared national heritage, exploring the potential to reconfigure exclusionary public narratives and their racial dynamics (2005). Naidoo argues that the imaginary discursive formation of heritage, which has long constructed a unified white British identity, could be replaced by, or challenged through, one in which British identity is made up of diverse and mixed heritages, where 'being

British is as much about being a black radical firebrand as it is about being a white Admiral of the fleet' (Naidoo, 2005, p. 46). This specifically proposes the establishment of a new, shared heritage discourse, which can comprise all members of society, rather than a selected few. Michael Rothberg argues that asserting and reproducing one event's memory in the public sphere can influence and make space for other memories. He refutes claims that the institutionalised memory of the Holocaust in the US deflects from the history of American slavery, but argues that the memory of the Holocaust can be used to open space to negotiate past injustices and their memories in the age of decolonisation (Rothberg, 2009).

These are important debates about who shapes understandings about the past and how those in power as well as those contesting power create relations with the past in the present and attribute value and importance. The literature sheds light on the different ways the past is used by minority groups in an unequal society, as well as how distinct heritage expressions are seen to be connected to wider societal and public concerns.

## **Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of academic, museums and heritage studies literature on knowledge-making about the past, including in this debates on publicness, difference and inequality. Academic history has been shown to depend strongly on source interpretation, the role of historians as writers of history, as well as the role of critical debate in an academic community. The political and exclusionary implications of academic practices have been highlighted by critical scholars. This has resulted in problems for investigating those who are less represented in the public record, specifically of concern for the history of migration and marginalised and racialised groups. Museum studies has researched how museums represent knowledge of the past, legitimising ways of knowing. Scholars have also highlighted the fraught relations between museums and marginalised members of the public. Museum representations of migration and minority histories have been criticised as celebratory, while a few scholars have investigated the relationship between cultural recognition and wider societal inequality. Heritage scholars have researched practices of making meaning about remains of the past and the role of power in the valuing of certain pasts over others, while also examining how personal and group connections to the past matter in wider society.

A variety of scholars have articulated a need for investigation into structural inequalities in academic, museum and heritage practices, highlighting the importance of cultural productions in their societal and power contexts (Scott, 1999; Littler, 2008; Paquet Kinsley, 2016; Lynch, 2014; Kushner, 2006; Myers, 2006; Gouriévidis, 2014, p.3).

Three specific areas emerge from this review of the literature that warrant further exploration. First, is the issue of methods and expertise. This asks how the three perspectives approach knowledge-making about the past. Neither academic historians nor heritage scholars have debated and investigated thoroughly the differences in approach and expertise between academics, museums and bottom-up perspectives. The largely constructivist framework of heritage studies has made it difficult to arbitrate between different claims to connections with the past, and heritage studies literature tends to prioritise bottom-up perspectives without interrogating how these claim *knowledge*, as well as value. Academic historical perspectives and their methodologies bring closer attention to how other actors, such as museums and heritage groups, approach making knowledge about the past. This also involves an investigation of how the three perspectives consider the history-makers' relationships to the past. Personal involvement with the past, while central to heritage studies' investigations, is acknowledged in academic history in terms of methodology, but not in terms of its political ramifications, nor has it been explored in wider academic discussions about history-making.

The second area where a gap has been shown is in the ways the three perspectives approach issues of publicness. Museums studies, heritage studies and academics have developed some understandings of these issues. While some academic historians propose a strict distinction between personal and public engagement with the past, others argued for a connection of the two. Scholars have investigated museums as public institutions, though sometimes museums' approaches to visitors, especially in the case of ethnic minority audiences, has been argued to separate minorities' interests from wider societal concerns. Heritage scholars have highlighted the importance of personal relations to the past, while only a few have advanced deeper understandings of these personal and groups' relations in connection with public matters relating to wider society. There are further questions about how personal connections with the past contribute or contradict notions of what matters are, or should be, central public concerns.

The third area that needs further examination is the effects of knowledge-making on the present. This considers knowledge not as confined to specific accounts about the past, but as enabling understandings of the present, as well as proposing, or enacting, practices that either change or confirm the present order. While heritage and museums scholarship has focused in depth on the role of representations of the past in the present and in the hierarchical structures of heritage, academic history has not been studied as having effects in the present. This thesis, then, explores academic history-making in terms of valorisation and authority, as well as investigating how academic, museum and bottom-up perspectives consider their own role in and impact on structural inequalities.

This thesis responds to the need to explore in more depth the roles of academics, museums and bottom-up approaches in the making of knowledge about the past, and to



examine how knowledge-making reproduces or challenges societal and cultural hierarchies. The study of three cases of making knowledge about minority pasts in Newcastle – academic historians' accounts, a museum display and a bottom-up community project – can enlighten these questions, adding to understandings of why and how people draw on the past in the present and the functions of the knowledge they make in an unequal present.

### 3. ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION AND MINORITY GROUPS IN THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND

#### Introduction

This chapter examines historians' role in historical knowledge-making by discussing academic research and writing about immigration and ethnic and religious minority groups. It focuses on the case of Tyneside in the North East of England and investigates how historical research into the past shapes the understanding, as well as the importance, of accounts of the past for society in the present.

The chapter is divided into six sections. The first sets the context for the investigation, scoping the academic research undertaken on the history of minorities in the UK. The second draws on interviews with academic historians to show how they conceive their own role in academic historical research and the role of historical knowledge in society. The third part provides an overview of the case study of migration to Tyneside, introducing the three major academic texts published. The fourth part analyses the making of these academic histories, their use of sources and the content told through them, illuminating the particular approaches that researchers have adopted in studying four key issues: housing, work, policy and identity. It then analyses how the publications represent claims about the publicness of the knowledge created, and finally, investigates the effects of these minority histories in the present.

The investigation of academic historical writing examined the written literature on ethnic minority groups in the UK, and especially histories written about Tyneside. The three publications chosen were Dave Renton's *Colour Blind*, Richard Lawless' *From Ta'izz to Tyneside* and Laura Tabili's *Global Migrants, Local Culture*, for their availability and prominence. These were supplemented by a range of published historical articles about the area. It analysed these writings as primary sources, investigating the methods used and the contexts of their production. This is based on the idea that methods and styles in writing histories can be understood as ethical choices (Johnson, 2012), and that the historian has an active role in shaping the historical knowledge they produce (Scott, 1999). It specifically analysed how the historical narratives situated knowledge of minority histories for the present. This asked how the narratives challenged existing histories and how they understood their own contribution.

I also interviewed six academic historians about their role in history research and in society.<sup>4</sup> The historians were chosen by their relevance to the theme – they were historians of British minority or migration history, historians of North East England, and historians with a specific interest in methods and public history. They were approached through emails. The interviews asked why they did the research they did, if personal and political convictions or experiences played a role in their choices and research, and what they thought of other ways of doing history and their experiences of them.

### **3.1. Context: Historical narratives of migrant and racialised minority groups in Britain**

Academic perspectives on migration and marginalised histories in the North East of England emerge from a tradition of writings on migration and minorities in Britain. These academics have asserted the importance of their research in filling gaps in knowledge about migrant and minority groups. Publishing in academic books and specialist journals, they challenged narratives of stability or of acceptance. British Jewish history has the longest established tradition, dating back to Cecil Roth's *The History of the Jews in England* (1941). Irish history in Britain has been written as early as 1943 by J. E. Handley (1964). Peter Fryer's seminal *Staying Power* (1984) and Rosina Visram's *Asians in Britain: 400 years of History* (1987) were foundational to the history of non-white minorities. Fryer's and Visram's books aim to challenge temporal conceptions. Visram's '400 years of history' challenges the idea that Asians in Britain are a recent phenomenon; Fryer's *Staying Power* argues that migrants were not a transitory phenomenon but rather stayed on in Britain and added to its fabric. Both aim at disrupting the narrative of an insular British history. Their work has been built on and expanded in range, for example by David Olusoga in *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (2017), and in depth, for example by Shompa Lahiri in *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity 1880-1930* (2000). Colin Holmes' *John Bull's Island* researched the history of migration to Britain from 1871-1971, presenting it in a context of continuous waves of migration and a changing population since Romans, Saxons and Vikings (1988). Humayun Ansari's history of Muslims in Britain reflects a renewed interest in the history of minorities categorised through religion (*The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain since 1800*, 2004, see also Halliday, 2010).

Some academics have explored the role of migration and racialised groups in Britain and expanded more theoretical understandings of these histories. Histories within Marxian

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<sup>4</sup> A list of interviewees can be found in the final section of the list of references.

traditions showed how structures of race and class interlinked in the experiences of colonial workers in Britain (Ramdin, 1987; Tabili, 1994). The investigations in New Imperial History questioned the relations between national and imperial histories and showed how the imperial context impacted on Victorian Britain (Hall, 2002; Burton, 2003), placing national examinations and studies of the impacts of racialisation in a wider framework. Several historians have also examined the role of borders in the making of a nation, and the construction of insiders and outsiders (Kushner, 2012), and the role of policy discourse in framing immigration as a 'problem' (Paul, 1997).

An examination of historical journals devoted to minorities reflects the separation between 'straight' academic history on minorities and the interdisciplinary historical tradition. In 1981, the journal *Immigrants and Minorities* was founded by Kenneth Lunn and Colin Holmes with the aim of providing an outlet for specifically historical work on migration, ethnic and racial minorities. The editors saw a lack of space for such distinctly historical work within the prevailing journal landscape in which the journals *Race and Class*, *International Migration Review*, and *Ethnic and Racial Studies* offered interdisciplinary perspectives, but mainly from within the social sciences. While there were already historical journals focused on particular minority groups, such as *The Journal on African American History* (formerly *The Journal of Negro History*) and *Jewish Social Studies*, with *Immigrants and Minorities*, they wanted to provide a space for publishing research on all minority groups, with a global outlook, and a prime focus on the modern and contemporary period. The editorial in the first edition reflects on the political circumstances of the journal's foundation – a time of economic recession, which brought with it increased hostility and violent outbreaks against immigrants and minority groups in Europe. The journal seeks to provide the historical context for these developments as well as to highlight the positive impact of migration and of minority groups within societies (Immigrants & Minorities, 1981). In 2014, the *Immigrants and Minorities* announced a reform towards 'some new directions'. It was now to be subtitled *Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, and the manifesto restated the aims of the first editors thirty years earlier to add to understanding of a changing multicultural society. The main change they reported was an addition to the editorial board, which would now include experts on Scottish and Irish migration, reflecting the recent emphasis of research (MacRaid and Mayall, 2014). The editorial board now includes one specialist on the African diaspora, but no specialist on the Asian diaspora. This is reflected, apart from one special edition, in a lack of articles in both areas, evidencing a major gap in historical research in the UK more widely. In line with its constitution as an exclusively historical journal, the journal has largely remained separate from studies in ethnicity and British multiculturalism in social sciences and cultural studies. Kushner's comments on the

absence of exchange between historical migration studies and postcolonial studies are particularly apt in this context (2012).

A journal with a broader interdisciplinary angle that engages in these debates is *Patterns of Prejudice*, founded in 1967. Originally founded to examine prejudice, especially antisemitism, in contemporary societies from multi-disciplinary angles, it also focuses on historical memory of the Holocaust, right-wing groups across Europe, education and current affairs, such as 'race relations' in Britain. Especially since the 1990s, this journal has increased its historical output, with the main focus still being to explore 'the historical roots and contemporary varieties of social exclusion and the demonization or stigmatisation of the Other. It probes the language and construction of 'race', nation, colour, and ethnicity, as well as the linkages between these categories' with articles reflecting the broad interdisciplinary range (Patterns of Prejudice, 2018).

Historians have focused on migrants' contributions as well as experiences of hostility. While academic historians have added critical understanding to the wider structures impacting on migrants' lives and their experiences, a disconnect between more theoretical scholarship on ethnicity and racism and historical scholarship is also evident. This scholarly work sets the context for how academics have explored migrants' and racialised groups' histories in the North East of England.

### **3.2. The motivations of academic historians**

Historians who were asked to clarify the motivations behind their research and its present significance offered several explanations. The historians interviewed for this chapter were historians of migration and minorities (Historian 1, Historian 2, Historian 6), regional historians of the North East (Historian 3), and historians with a specific interest in community history (Historian 4, Historian 5). This selection of academics in terms of their specialisation on minorities and communities, means their responses may differ greatly from those of a larger and perhaps more representative sample of academic historians. A more quantitative and potentially more representative survey-based study of UK-based academic historians was beyond the scope of this thesis. However, several tendencies within the responses in this qualitative study, do correspond to theoretical or methodological writings in academic history. I have highlighted these connections to the wider literature in the analysis below. Analysis of interviewees' verbal reflections deepens understanding of historians' motivations and approaches, which influence the shaping of, but are not always clearly articulated within, their published work. This section investigates the specific perspectives academics bring to the study of the past, exploring how they conceive of their own role in relation to the research, as well as how they consider the relevance of their research.

Motivations articulated for historical research were often explicitly connected to its present use. For example, interviewees articulated the importance of putting the present into its historical context in order to enable people to understand what is happening now, and appreciate the legacies that societies live with and operate under. History was seen as an important tool both for learning how to critically examine evidence about the past and for thinking critically about the present:

I do think that we have a social role to make students and young people think about things that are happening in the world today. Hence, we wanted to develop this race module, to get them to think about migration and stereotyping. (...) I'd like them to be critical in the way that they approach politics, the media, society, etc. (Historian 2, 2016)

Well I guess an obvious example would be the need to keep reiterating the ... the imperial context of, or the imperial history, that forms the context for various world crises. (Historian 4, 2016)

Both Historian 4 and Historian 2 also mention the way historical knowledge offers 'perspectives' (Historian 2, 2016), or 'informed perspectives' (Historian 4, 2016) – the opportunity to 'show things from a non-white, non-European perspective, to challenge people's, to challenge students' viewpoints' (Historian 2, 2016) and 'thinking about people who are different from ourselves.' (Historian 4, 2016) Historian 3 expressed the view that knowledge about the past was empowering in a context where everything was in flux, as it helped to make informed decisions and understand the present.

what's happening in the present and how knowledge of the past can help us mediate that. Because I feel because of my knowledge of the past, I'm quite empowered in contexts where everything is in flux and we have to make decisions and we have to understand the present, because it's a resource. (Historian 3, 2016)

These motivations saw the use of a distant past as a resource to provide perspectives or context to the present. This concern for critical perspectives on the present is widely embraced in literature on history education (Seixas, 2006) and in theoretical reflections by some academic historians (Tosh, 2008; Guldi and Armitage, 2014).

The academics discussed their own personal relationship to their research and to the past in differing ways. Historian 3 asserted that the past was not an 'important marker of my own identity' (2016), distancing herself from a 'sense of rootedness' which she found in the communities in her research, and Historian 2 mentioned an interest in his family's history, but cited this as unconnected to his academic research (2016). However, several of the other academic respondents acknowledged the role of their own personal backgrounds or experiences for their research (Historian 1, 2016; Historian 5, 2016; Historian 4, 2016; Historian 6, 2017). The strongest statements of this came from Historian 1 and Historian 6:

I don't think I realised how important my family background was until I was finishing my dissertation, and I came to write the acknowledgements, and I realised ... - my grandparents were immigrants also, and I realised, oh

good heavens, I've been writing an autobiography, all that time, and I didn't realise it! (Historian 1, 2016)

And certainly my background in an industrial town very much shapes what interests me, and the fact that my father was a Scots immigrant to that town, is strongly influential, and then my mother was born in India, also an immigrant, a ... return migrant, and I myself have lived in New Zealand, here in Ulster, and also in England, ..., so I think actually a very strong personal driver. (Historian 6, 2017)

In other interviews, an acknowledgement of the importance of personal background to the academic research was often followed by a statement that affirmed the ambition to neutralise this personal background. Historian 5 explained:

I'd been involved in radical left-wing politics and I was – so my outlook on what I wanted to study was related to my political perspective. ... Having said that, while I think it's important ... for a long period of time, I was also, and still am, concerned that we study the past for its, in its own terms, if not for its own sake, so I can see ... I can see how my family background and personal perspective play a part, but it's not about ... I don't do my history from the present backwards, I look at the past, as far as I can, on its own terms.

Historian 5 thus acknowledged the importance of his personal background, while at the same time articulating his aim of leaving it behind. Historian 6 did not express aims of distancing himself for his academic research, but saw the value of academic research in understanding the present and providing critical analyses and insights, not as specifically connected to his own past (Historian 6, 2017).

Historian 4, on the other hand, described knowledge of history as 'fundamental,' especially in terms of identity and agency, and stressed the role of history for 'resilience' (2016). Historian 4 was also the only academic who expressed a strong sense of personal connection to the past. She emphasised the role that historical analysis and the cultivation of a sense of continuous tradition of activism and radical thought could play in terms of the fight for gender equality, and deplored the

absence of any strong sense of "We've tackled all of this for years" and "let's look at what Mary Wollstonecraft was saying in the 1790s" and "let's look at what people were doing in relation to the CD Acts in the 1860s" ..., and all this sort of stuff, and it's just not there, (...) – and I think it could be. (Historian 4, 2016)

While others acknowledged their personal heritage and personal and political convictions as factors, for Historian 4, the question about the importance of research and the historical discipline was connected to her personal feeling about the past as 'fundamental'. She expresses ideas about continuity with history and activism in the past, strikingly emphasised through her use of the pronoun 'we.' Historian 1, too, saw herself as connected to the past, though in a different way:

One of the things that my first book<sup>5</sup> was going to talk about, was that racism is not just something that's ... omnipresent. ... "people can't help it" ... it's "visceral" – but that there were reasons why, and that we could dismantle those structures that made racism benefit – beneficial to some people, and harmful to others, and we could dismantle them if we wanted to, and we ought to. (Historian 1, 2016)

She talked about the societal structures in the past tense – that *made* racism benefit – but the sentence seamlessly changed into the present tense – we could dismantle them, and *we ought to*. She continued 'as I say, that's my agenda (dismantling racist structures), and that's why some people think a person like me shouldn't be writing history.' Importantly, she clearly saw herself implicated in these historical structures.

Historian 5 on the other hand, while expressing similar ideas about change, used the general pronoun 'you' (apart from when discussing the view he dismissed), and the generic phrase 'people':

History is important because it empowers people to change things for the future. So, it doesn't give us lessons, I think that's nonsense. But it does provide people with inspiration... you're saying "things don't have to be like they were, you can change them" so that's why history is important. (2016)

This sense of the importance of a connection to the past *for others* was evident in the majority of responses. While some responses discussed the use of knowledge about the past for communities (Historian 3, 2016), or the general public (Historian 6, 2017), several interviewees particularly mentioned their students as those who benefitted from historical knowledge (Historian 5, 2016; Historian 2, 2016; Historian 4, 2016). Their teaching seemed to be the major domain, in which the importance of knowledge about the past had to be justified.

Some of the interviewees stated that their ethical and political convictions played a part in how they chose their research focus. Half of the academics stressed the importance of politics in academic historical work, even though most considered theirs to be a minority view within academia. Historian 5 and Historian 3 stated their political convictions as important for their research, as well as stating their commitment to enabling change, and challenging the status quo. While the idea of history as a critical tool was expressed by most interviewees, this was done with varying degrees of urgency, and some offered stronger examples of critical thinking and an understanding of change (Historian 2, 2016; Historian 3, 2016; Historian 6, 2017), as well as stronger ideas of responsibility (Historian 5, 2016; Historian 4, 2016; Historian 1, 2016). Thus, while most of the historians interviewed discussed the importance of history in terms of understanding change in past

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<sup>5</sup> *"We Ask for British Justice": Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain (1994) discussed labour relations in port towns in an imperial context*



and present, for some, there is a distinct political point to it, as it is about changing the present. Historian 5 described how he decided what to teach students:

The module on which I was really responsible, (...) I removed most of the labour history from it. Because I didn't think it mattered. What I thought mattered was why the Conservatives won so many elections in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and I thought I can teach the students about Labour history all I like, *but* does it empower anyone to change anything? (...) I was teaching from political perspectives – saying “well, why is it that *they're* in control, why do their ideas dominate stuff.” (Historian 5, 2016) (emphasis in interview)

An historical understanding of how parties come to and maintain power could, according to this perspective, help people in the present, and specifically history students, to formulate strategies which enable them to have an impact on contemporary society. It is this political conviction shared by several of the interviewees that perhaps separates them from the majority of their academic colleagues – as stated in two responses (Historian 1, 2016; Historian 5, 2016). Further research is needed to investigate how far this feeling that political motivations are not shared by their colleagues is based on actual divisions within History. Investigating how things came to be as they are does not necessarily lead to the present order being challenged. History can show possibilities and alternatives, but it can also help to maintain the present order – it can explain how the present order emerged and why it should be preserved as it is. Thus, history could also provide an argument for stability and support conservative politics. None of the historians interviewed, and indeed none of the historical writings examined, explicitly support any such aims. It should be stressed that not all history is in itself transformative. However, understood in the way proposed by several interviewees, through illuminating change and processes in the past, history can throw light on contemporary social dynamics – and show what can be done to change these.

### **3.3. Case study: academic histories of migration to Tyneside**

The historical research on historical migrations to, and minority groups within, Tyneside over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries explores a diverse range of migration flows and racialised minority groups. There are studies of the Scottish and Irish from the nineteenth century (Burnett, 2007; Neal, 2009); of Northern Europeans in the late nineteenth century (Tabili, 2011); of Arabs, and specifically Yeminis, in South Shields from the start of the twentieth century (Lawless, 1995; Jenkinson, 1993); of Jewish communities from the late nineteenth century (Copsey, 2002); of Second World War refugees (Armstrong, 2007); and of post-war migration of Asian communities in Newcastle (Hackett, 2009; Renton, 2007); and of African and Asian refugees in the late twentieth Century (Renton, 2007). South Shields was one of the biggest ports in the North in the

nineteenth century and one of the main exporting ports and a centre for seamen signing on ships (Lawless, 1995). The industrial context of the area of Tyneside is also important for the historical movement of people, with shipbuilding and heavy industries providing employment for many minority groups.

The North East has enjoyed a public image as a place welcoming to newcomers and accepting of difference. A much-cited *Guardian* article from 1962 reported that South Shields and its Yemeni population was 'a study in integration, a place where colour prejudice died years ago. You can see it best in the children; the way they stream out of school together like a human rainbow . . .' (cited in Renton, 2007, p. 2). South Shields has been used as an example of successful integration (Carr, 1992). The trope concerning the welcoming culture of this area is often evidenced by the strong connection between labour organisations, a left-wing tradition and anti-racist culture in the area (Copsey, 2002; Renton, 2007). Many of the histories discussed here are written against the backdrop of the public portrayal of Tyneside's welcoming past. Recent academic research contests these popular accounts of North East exceptionalism (Armstrong, 2007; Hackett, 2009; Copsey, 2002; Renton, 2007). Copsey, for example, questions the statement made by the community historian Lewis Olsover, who stated that 'anti-Semitism never became a major concern for North East Jewry' (2002, p. 52).

Three main academic histories about minorities and migration to Tyneside have been published. Investigating these three particular authors and their work illustrates how historians frame aims and provides the background to discuss the main themes brought up by historians on minority histories in Tyneside.

*From Tai'zz to Tyneside An Arab Community in the North East of England during the Early Twentieth Century* by Richard Lawless (1995) traces the Arab community in South Shields from the early twentieth century. Richard Lawless was Director of the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies in the University of Durham, and when *From Tai'zz to Tyneside* was published, he was Emeritus Reader in Middle Eastern Studies at the University. His research was supported by grants from the World of Islam Festival Trust and the Government of the former Yemen Arab Republic, with additional funding from the British Council. He acknowledges the support received from a research assistant, the Local Studies Library staff, South Tyneside Libraries' local documentary sources (1995, p. vii), and the British Library as well as his contacts in the Yemeni community. The stated reason for his research is the previous *neglect* by academic researchers of Arab communities in Britain, because of a focus on Muslim communities from South Asia, and prioritisation of the study of migrant communities' relations with the host country over study of their internal dynamics. He states that

By focussing on the relations between the Arab seamen and the host society, on the internal organization and dynamics of this seafaring

community, and on the links with their country of origin, the study attempts to cover important aspects of the lives of Arab seamen in Britain that have so far been neglected. (1995, p.2)

The research records seamen's experiences, their 'everyday lives' (p.2). The 'decline of the community through intermarriage and assimilation' (1995, p. 250) is hinted at in the last chapter. Lawless' research is based mainly on local newspapers and archives in South Shields and Tyneside, the Oriental and India Office Collections and archives in the Public Record Office. The main source used to gauge public opinion is published letters to the editor of the *Shields Daily Gazette*. The study also includes some narrative accounts of members of the Arab community in South Shields. Drawing on these sources, the book offers a detailed account of Arab seamen in South Shields, tracing their early settlement from shortly before the First World War, and discussing housing arrangements, work and conflicts at work, and mixed marriages. It explores the connections that Yemenis maintained with their place of origin, their involvement in local issues in Yemen, and the return of many, showing the importance of diasporic links (1995, p. 46). Lawless further argues that hostility in Tyneside subsided because of assimilation and integration, but this was at the expense of a loss of Arab or Muslim identity (Lawless, 1995, p. 7). While the book steers clear of any explicit social or political argument, the discussion of assimilation implicitly connects to contemporary debates.

Dave Renton's *Colour Blind? Race and Migration in North East England Since 1945* (2007) is set within the context of regional industrial decline over the second half of the twentieth century. Dave Renton was based at the University of Sunderland and received funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to conduct his research. He acknowledges a network of academic historical scholars in the region in supporting his work, as well as community campaigners involved in anti-racist projects (Renton, 2007, p. ix). He also thanks archivists at local and national archives (ibid, p. x). *Colour Blind?* aims to fill a gap in scholarship by providing an account of international migration to the North East after 1945. The question driving Renton's research concerns the nature of the reception of migrants, and he aims to test the claim that the North East did not experience any hostility to migrants, in contrast to the rest of the country (2007, p. 2f). Renton states that 'At the heart of this book is a distinction between different kinds of responses to migrants and their descendants.' (2007, p. 4) His primary sources mainly consist of regional and local records: community organisations' records, local council records, local newspaper reports, opinion polls, national records from the home office and commonwealth office, and also interviews with local politicians, trade unionists and community and anti-racist activists (2007, p. 15). He also heavily draws on secondary sources, such as published accounts of other academics and biographical accounts, such as, for example, local anti-racist activist, Chris Mullard's experiences, recorded in his *Black Britain*. Renton investigates the left-wing culture of anti-racism and anti-fascism in

the North East and examines how changes in labour culture and the economic situation impacted on organisation.

Laura Tabili's *Global Migrants Local Culture Natives and Newcomers in Provincial England* (2011) researches global migration and its impact in South Tyneside between 1841 and 1939. Laura Tabili was Associate Professor of Modern European History, University of Arizona when the book was published, and is now Professor of History at the same university. The book was published in 2011 by Palgrave Macmillan. Financial assistance was provided by various research funds, from the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the American Philosophical Society, as well as from the University of Arizona (2011, p. ix). Tabili received research support from local history librarians, staff at the museums and archives service, including the now Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, staff at the archives and library of the local newspaper, staff at the Public Record Office and the Home Office and the Advisory Council on Public Records (2011, p. ix). She also acknowledges the role of readers and academic seminars in the development of her work. Laura Tabili's research has two related aims. One is related to the lack of academic and public knowledge about historic migration to Britain and its constitutive role for the country. Tabili argues that the work of academic historians has generated a public culture based on an image of British history as insular. Her work aims to contest this:

The erasure of these historical migrations from scholarly and popular consciousness has exacerbated controversies over recent migration to Britain. (Tabili, 2011, p. 2)

In her introduction, Tabili asserts a continuation of the past she examines into the present, leading to the second aim:

Institutional racism, adversarial policing, and state and media rhetoric of cultural dissonance have continued in xenophobic responses to asylum seekers, migrants from Eastern Europe and even British-born Muslim youth. (Tabili, 2011, p. 2)

Tabili argues that the research and knowledge about historic migration to the UK could offer alternative ways of approaching social relations.

At a time and place where xenophobia again appears ascendant, this book is offered as evidence that it need not be so. (Tabili, 2011, p. x)

Tabili's work includes an examination of the seven census records from 1841 to 1901 of overseas-born residents of South Shields, and naturalisation case files between 1879 and 1939. Municipal records and police reports are also employed in the study. The research examines how diverse migrants and local people in South Shields acted given their circumstances from the second half of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth. Tabili investigates these circumstances as dependent on global, national and local events and structures. She depicts a diverse local port and its transient and permanent inhabitants.

The analysis shows migrants integrated into everyday networks of neighbours, business and work relations, and religious networks, such as churches or synagogues. Tabili's research highlights that many migrants lived in local households, as well as demonstrating a high level of inter-marriage. Tabili's analysis further argues that women played important roles as gatekeepers to local society. She concludes her study by investigating the impact of changing imperial and industrial contexts on local networks, arguing that due to international crises, global migrants became subject to policing and surveillance. Freedom of movement was curtailed for overseas-born seamen, separating them from the local society, and making integration difficult. The final chapters explore the First World War as a time when hostility towards migrants was at a height.

### **3.4. Making academic knowledge**

An examination of the making of academic knowledge reveals the methodologies these academics employed, how they considered historic evidence and how they approached the limitations of sources.

The academics presented their research in terms of contributing scholarly knowledge about the past. Several of the academic accounts sought to provide a more encompassing account of the make-up of the area – suggesting that the society and its culture was more diverse than previously asserted (Armstrong, 2007; Renton, 2007; Lawless, 1995; Tabili, 2011). Examination of racism often cited the myth of the welcoming region (Armstrong, 2007; Hackett, 2009; Copsey, 2002; Renton, 2007) and violent outbreaks in South Shields were mobilised to challenge the myth of harmony (Carr, 1992). The academic research was thus positioned as more factual than public myths. The aim of Nigel Copsey's article is to act as a fact-check on the history of Jews in Newcastle. Since the major work *The Jewish Communities of North East England* was written by the community historian Lewis Olsover, Copsey saw the necessity for an academic to balance the account. He considered community history as 'hagiographic' and questions Olsover's assertion that antisemitism never played a major role in the North East. Renton aimed to construct 'objective distinctions' between hostile and welcoming responses to migrants, seeing the role of the historian in combining and evaluating perspectives to create an objective account.

The key themes which emerged in the three works discussed above and in other academic journal articles and edited collections relating to the history of migration and minorities in the region reflected some of the challenges of researching migration history. Academics' reliance on official and traditional historical records limited their remit – a challenge remarked on by several academic historians of migration and minority history

(Kushner, 2001; Visram, 2002, Taylor, 2010). The official record enabled the telling of certain stories, while providing little evidence for others. This becomes clear when the key common themes which emerge in the studies are examined in more detail – namely, issues of work, policy and political actors, housing, identity, with racism being a point of discussion in each of these. Details of these are analysed in turn below.

A thematic focus of several accounts was on work. Tabili's account located migration within a South Shields' population that increased substantially in the nineteenth century, with shipbuilding, engineering and metal trades attracting in-migrants in the second half of the century, and Irish migrants filling jobs in alkali works (Tabili, 2011, p. 26), also highlighting the role of foreign and colonised workers in the town's shipyards and onboard ships (2011, p. 27). She further detailed migrants' occupations based on her detailed examination of census records, also dedicating a section to migrant women's work – in some cases as retailers and musicians, for example (2011, p. 166). Neal's analysis of the 1851 census showed that of 88 percent of Irish men who recorded a job description, most were labourers and coal miners. The 21 percent Irish women for whom a job was recorded were employed in domestic service and housekeeping (Neal, 2009, p. 71). Using keyword searches in digitised newspaper archives, focusing particularly on advertisements, Caroline Bressey found a reference to an illusionist in Newcastle in February 1886 who was looking for a "coloured lady and a negro boy" for a performance job (Bressey, 2010, p. 174). She showed that black men and women were present in various labour markets – not just as seamen (Bressey, 2010, p. 178). Lawless' account mentioned women working in boarding houses as domestic servants, but did not cite a source for this (1995, p. 175). It is likely he based this knowledge on his interviews with boarding house masters themselves.

A large part of academics' accounts of work were focused around conflict, competition and hostility. Lawless' account intricately detailed outbreaks of violence, in two major chapters of his book, stating that 'Examples of hostility from the local community towards Arab seamen settling in the town can be found from the outset' (Lawless, 1995, p. 74). It relied on letters to the editor of the local newspaper to show racist attitudes, as well as newspaper articles to tell a detailed chronicle of events concerning labour disputes and outbreaks of violence between 'locals' and 'Arabs' in South Shields in 1919 (ibid., pp. 79ff), and continuing tensions until the 1930s (ibid., pp. 113ff). Byrne drew on newspaper accounts, including the National Union of Seamen's monthly journal, and the communist newspaper *The Daily Worker* and court proceedings to discuss tensions in 1930 as work and union issues rather than account 'race' (1977).

Another key theme to emerge in the historical literature is that of policy. Drawing on official state and council documentation, research has investigated the role of policy-makers locally, regionally and nationally in either accommodating newcomers and providing them

with opportunities to participate fully in society, or framing them as a problem that has to be dealt with (Paul, 1997). Tabili drew on national documentation to examine the effects of the Aliens Act of 1905 (Tabili, 2011, p. 180), which introduced restrictions on immigration. She showed the Board of Trade's and Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen's concern about this restriction, and that they were able to facilitate naturalisation of mariners needed in the industries through a new, simplified process (2011, p. 181). She also argued that the Aliens Restriction Act of August 1914 was imposing 'increasingly severe measures' on those without British passports (2011, p. 190), requiring registration when entering or leaving the country and restricting residence and movement from May 1917, as well as expanding the Home Secretary's powers of exclusion and deportation. She argued that this impacted both on mobile members of the maritime industry, as well as on 'stable and longstanding residents' (2011, p. 190). Lawless detailed official efforts, starting in 1920, to curtail Arabs' movements and reduce their numbers nationally by drawing on documentation from the Public Record Office (Lawless, 1995, pp. 98ff).

Sarah Hackett examined how local politics differed from or aligned with national policies, drawing on specific committees set up by the council, such as the 'Black Business Development Project' (2011, p. 299). She argued against notions of regional exceptionalism, and claimed that the responses to migrant groups by Newcastle City Council followed national policies. Hackett traces the plans of several working groups, committees and sub-committees set up to support Asian and other ethnic minority businesses, showing that their plans were not pursued or failed since the council addressed these businessmen as one homogeneous group, rather than as individuals. Hackett also proposed that the council did not engage and respond to the needs and preferences of minority communities in relation to housing (Hackett, 2009, p. 306). The council followed national guidelines with regards to education too, pursuing assimilationist policies in the 1960s, and multicultural policies in the 1980s. Hackett argues that the council's actions were not effective in contributing to any successes of the ethnic minority communities within Newcastle (Hackett, 2009).

Renton's less focused discussion of local politics drew on various published accounts, newspapers, council records and one interview. His assessment of council actions in 'community relations' involved the minutes of a 'Commonwealth Immigrants Working Group' in 1968, which he depicted as very ineffective, with their main action consisting in planning to appoint a part-time Liaison Officer (Renton, 2007, p. 113f). Renton's examination of 1970s community relations mainly through the lens of Black British activist Chris Mullard, drew on his published memoirs, as well as an interview Renton conducted. He was an activist, writer and the first full-time officer of local Community Relations Commission, appointed in 1970 (Renton, 2007, p. 120). His experiences of the past are told through his perspective, including controversies and tensions, with Mullard leaving his

position in 1973 over difficulties with the local and the national Commission (ibid., p.122). Renton's affirmation of the role of the unions in the North East in combating racism, in the late 1960s, is that 'The unions were drawn more closely into anti-racist work. Newcastle Trades council denounced Powell and his allies.' (ibid., p. 134) which was based on Minutes from the Trades Council. Renton acknowledged the difficulties of writing contemporary history, with official records of Community Relations Councils still sealed (2007, p.15), with his account reflecting his struggles.

Examination of political activism also included organised forms of racism and anti-racism, in groups, marches and violent outbreaks. This was partially determined by the source material of organisations' publications and newspaper articles used. Copsey's research showed both antisemitic organisations and those combatting antisemitism in Newcastle in the first half of the twentieth century. Copsey discussed the establishment of several radical groups set up by mainly young men, two of them Jewish groups, formed in the 30s and 40s, mainly based on diverse newspaper reports of violent incidents, fascist and anti-fascist actions. Based on minutes from the local committee of the Representative Council of Newcastle Jewry, he detailed conflicts between those amongst the council who openly challenged fascism and those who disapproved of those group's public speaking (Copsey, 2002, p. 63). Renton also detailed a protest march organised by the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination in 1968, outlining the local press' hostility to it (2007, p. 115).

The study of the housing patterns of migrant and minority communities has been made possible by the existence of census records, as well as council records. Neal's analysis of the Irish community in Gateshead at the time of the 1851 census showed that Irish people clustered in certain areas, but were distributed amongst most districts, rather than ghettoised (2009). Over two thirds of Irish marriages were amongst Irish people, with the rest marrying English or Scottish people (Neal, 2009). Tabili's work, while acknowledging the spatial segregation of the Irish in Victorian South Shields (2011, p. 66), focused mainly on housing integration. Her analysis showed the co-habitation of overseas-born men with local or British women, as well as fewer overseas-born women heading households. She argued that South Shields was made up a heterogeneous society, with many people from Europe as well as overseas moving and settling there, as well as moving through. Her research showed that international migrants lived dispersed amongst families and only became locally segregated towards the end of the nineteenth century. The census records between 1841 and 1901 suggested overseas migrants lived in South Shields amongst and co-habited with members of the 'local' population, and clustered along occupational lines (2011, p. 66f), with few homogenous migrant households (2011, p. 102). Most overseas born residents at that time did not establish visible communities. Tabili's research also showed that British born residents of South Shields had travelled overseas, and some had married overseas, thus adding to the diverse make-up of households and



local society. She argued that it was the intervention of the state that 'segregate(d) mariners from local society... hostility increasingly became inflected with xenophobia and racism as the workforce grew more diverse and militant' (2011, p. 119).

Lawless' study of the period following Tabili's research, in contrast, suggested a more segregated picture of living arrangements amongst Arab sailors from the start of the twentieth century, on the basis of evidence from the local newspaper as well as council records, arguing that many Arab seamen only had superficial or passing contacts with 'local' South Shieldsers (Lawless, 1995, p. 15). His knowledge of the boarding houses also seemed reliant on conversations with 'members of the Arab community in South Shields' (Lawless, 1995, viii), as he acknowledged some boarding house masters' assistance in his research and did not cite any other sources in his description of the establishments (ibid., p. 49f). Based on this testimonial information, he asserted that boarding houses established from the early twentieth century were run on ethnic lines, with masters mainly from the Yemen, but 'at least one ... was kept by an Egyptian.' He stated that '(m)ost of the Yemeni boarding-houses appear to have catered exclusively for Arabs, but a few took seamen of other nationalities', including Indian and Malay seamen (ibid, p. 49). These descriptions were followed by accounts of conflict between lodgers and masters, and rivalry between masters, based on court proceedings detailed in the local newspaper, the *South Shields Gazette*. Despite housing segregation, Lawless showed that white women were working, and indeed socialising, in Arab's boarding houses (Lawless, 1995, p. 175). Based on council records and newspaper accounts, his investigation showed that by the 1920s, mixed marriages were common enough to elicit negative responses from other residents and members of the local council (1995, p. 174ff).

Lawless then investigated how, from 1929, the local council debated the 'threat of disease' and 'overcrowding' and started imposing restrictions on Arab men, such as denying one of them a boarding house license (ibid., 189). In the 1930s, the local council decided to rehouse Arab residents into a segregated housing area following slum clearances (ibid., p. 187f). These proposals were opposed by several Arab residents, as shown in newspaper articles and letters (ibid., p. 196). Through council minutes, Lawless also showed opposition amongst councillors, with one arguing for the need for suitable housing, rather than a "storehouse of inflammable material likely to burst into flames at any moment" (ibid., p.199f). This increasing pressure and regulation of Arabs were also supported by Tabili, who proposed that global pressures and changes in legislation policed and restricted global migrants, making integration more difficult (2011; see also Tabili, 1994).

Co-habitation was also treated in terms of racism. Lawless, Armstrong and Jenkinson mentioned that black men who had relationships with white women in many instances encountered hostility (1995; 2007; 1992). In South Shields, married Arab men and white

women encountered 'moral outrage' from the 1910s onwards, resulting in some concern by local authorities and letters to the *South Shields Gazette* by some local white residents (Lawless, 1995, p. 176f). Lawless argued that alliances elicited negative responses from the outset, with the earliest evidence of 'racial disturbances' involving an Arab who had a relationship with a local girl in 1913 (1995, p. 174). In the text of his chapters on the post-first world war period and on mixed marriages, several pages of letters to the *South Shields Gazette* are printed, that are both hostile to the seamen and in support of them (1995, p. 88f; p. 182). Defences came from both seamen themselves, women married to them, and white residents of South Shields. While he entitled one section 'popular feelings on mixed marriages' (1995, p. 180), the letters serve as his only source, and wider popular feelings were not discussed. The detailed accounts and extensive academic debate on periods of conflict in 1919 and 1930, as well as the treatment of racism as an issue in co-habitation and mixed marriages, and each of the other themes covered, reflect the biased nature of the formal historic record, where police records and newspaper accounts provide insights into friction, leading to a distorted account of migration and minority experiences (Kushner, 2001; Elukin, 2007). Several historians have attempted to surpass these limitations and gain deeper insights into minority groups' and individuals' experiences.

One key theme emerging from attempts to expand the use of historical sources, was the question of migrant and minority groups' identities. While historians mostly drew on organised associations' records in researching this area, they also had limited access to everyday expressions of identities. Drawing on interviews with Arab men of South Shields, Richard Lawless detailed the role of boarding house masters as well as cultural and religious organisations in the organisation of the Yemeni seafaring community from the early twentieth century. Boarding house masters provided administrative and financial support to the seafarers, and the houses also acted as social and cultural hubs (Lawless, 1995). In a very short section, and presumably drawing on interviews, as no sources were referenced, he stated:

In the absence of close relatives, or even men from the same village seamen sought the company of members of their own tribe. A Shamiri tribesman, for example, was a Shamiri before he was a Yemeni. There was little sense of unity in those times. (Lawless, 1995, p. 49)

Through letters by boarding house masters to the local newspaper, he also explored community dynamics as influenced by unions, with policy environment, repatriation, and financial pressures impacting on 'community leaders' roles (ibid., p. 56). In an article concerning Yemeni seafarers in the first half of the twentieth century in British ports, Lawless discussed the internal and external dynamics of community, and the intermediary role played by international Islamic institutions which were supported by British authorities. He argued that these organisations exerted a form of social control (1994, p. 35f),

showing that London-based institutions and individuals re-Islamised Arab seafaring communities, institutionalising 'several facets of religious life' (1994, p. 42). Definitions of 'community' were difficult, however. While Lawless' research showed divisions, individual actors, and the processes involved in the making of the community, the title of his book still represented the Yemeni sailors as a unit – an 'Arab community'. Tabili on the other hand illuminated what was meant by the denotation 'Arab' or 'Arab community', often used in relation to some of the South Shields mariners in the early twentieth century. Her research showed that this 'community' did not just include Yemenis, but Somalis, Egyptians, and members of the Indian diaspora.

Tabili's research showed that migrant 'communities' were often shaped through work and kinship networks, analysing how some groups maintained and formed ties, others not. Tabili's investigation of community and kinship networks amongst migrants suggested that German and Jewish residents established occupational, kin and confessional networks, with both groups migrating as families, and Jewish residents establishing ties across the region, and both establishing religious congregations (2011, p. 78). Tabili asserted that migrant women were central to these communities, stating

Large numbers of women born overseas correlated with the development of German, Jewish and Scandinavian communal institutions in South Shields. This suggests such women proved critical to the survival and stabilization of migrant networks that remained culturally, albeit not geographically, distinct within local society. (ibid., p. 164).

Drawing on naturalisation and other Home Office documentation, Tabili also stressed the role of local women in integrating migrants, as they fulfilled central roles as gatekeepers, for example as landladies or wives (ibid., p. 153f).

In terms of Scots migrants to Tyneside in the nineteenth century, an article by John Burnett examined Scottish cultural organisations in North East England and showed that, besides fostering Scottish cultural identities, they acted also as vehicles for integration into their local societies (Burnett, 2007; see also Bueltmann, 2014). He also analysed debates and changes in the rules of membership of these societies as relaxing over time, showing a change in understandings of cultural and ethnic identity (Burnett, 2007, p. 8). Burnett argued that 'the blending of Scottish and Irish cultures with an emerging north-eastern regional identity produced an interesting hybrid' (Burnett, 2007, p. 16). The cultural associations of Scottish migrants showed examples of two-way contact in the making of a regional identity. This two-way exchange between minority and majority culture has been tentatively explored in other academic accounts (Manz and Panayi, 2012, p. 132).

MacPherson's research further added to understandings of the relationship between majority and minority, and expectations of who was to accommodate whom. Tyneside Irish politician Chris O'Hanlon negotiated and challenged understandings of regional identity, and was committed to 'forging links between the Irish and English working

classes' (MacPherson, 2007, p. 166). MacPherson argued that this political actor – even though unsuccessful in his campaigns and not widely supported – advocated for the host society to adapt to newcomers (2007). These are examples of historic accounts that sought to elucidate the ways migrants and ethnic minorities impact on regional identity.

The ways in which private consumption linked local and international identity has also been explored through an article examining Chinese imports to the North East during the eighteenth century. Jessica Hanser showed that international goods formed part of urban households in Newcastle, such as in the drinking of imported tea and ownership of Chinese tableware, from the first half of the eighteenth century (Hanser, 2012). She specifically argued that the North East was implicated in an international trade network, with local shops opening and members of all classes consuming tea (Hanser, 2012). At the national level, Panayi has examined food and consumption to show diversification and integration of international cultures into national culture. He argued that exchange worked in both directions, with minorities' food traditions becoming anglicised after settlement in Britain (Panayi, 2012), and British food becoming more multicultural through globalisation and immigration (Panayi, 2008). Cookbooks, food writers and national and multinational companies had roles in assigning ethnic or national identities to dishes while certain products and dishes were naturalised as British (Panayi, 2008).

The exploration of identities was particularly difficult for historians when they attempted to move beyond group identities to the issue of personal identities. Academic accounts that relied on evidence of organised aspects of identity were less able to provide insights into questions of self-identification and of the personal meaning of cultural identifiers. In most instances, the archival material used recorded the voice of officials. In Tabili's approach, past migrants' voices become discernible through the traditional historic record, as for example when they portray themselves to the authorities in their naturalisation applications. The documents, for example, presented changes in national allegiances to the authorities, with one applicant declaring his 'connections to the German empire are severed' and another stating the benefit of naturalisation to his children 'whose sympathies and interests are wholly British' (2011, p. 137). Many of the naturalisation applications showed the integration of migrants into local networks, especially through marriage (2011, p. 152). The research showed that an exploration of migrants' experiences was somewhat possible also through the creative use of the archival records (see Taylor, 2010). The migrants' 'voice' was however also mediated by state demands as 'the (naturalisation) process itself restricted individuals' expression in formulaic ways' (Tabili, 2011, p. 126).

Several of the accounts remarked on the limitations of the historic sources available to make knowledge about migration and minority groups' pasts. The partiality of the record was discussed by Tabili, who stated that sources 'rendered visible only a fraction' of

events and relationships (2011, p. 124). Lawless exemplified the problem with sources, stating the choice of South Shields as determined by the availability of sources: 'The Arab community in Cardiff was more important but the local documentary sources are far richer in South Shields' (1995, p. 2). Renton emphasised the importance of interviews, to 'provide a corrective voice, challenging ideas that appeared in print at the time, enabling us to view migration not just as it was experienced by the sorts of agencies that record movements, the police, the Home Office, local government and other state authorities, but by the people themselves who arrived, and from below' (Renton, 2007, p. 15f). Tabili noted the 'humbling recognition that the documentary record conceals as much as it discloses' – often it was not possible, for example, to tell the birthplace and skin colour of those who were recorded (Tabili, 2011, p. 50). Kushner has cautioned academic to be aware of these limitations and specifically highlight the gaps in the record (2001).

The historians analysed here found several ways of circumventing limitations in documentary evidence. Despite the primacy that academics accorded to written evidence, such as the census, police records, council policy documents and newspapers, non-traditional sources, such as testimonial evidence, were explored by several accounts. Renton stated the importance of migrants' voices and experiences, and showed a commitment to accounts 'from below' (2007, p. 15f). Lawless too saw a value in the lived experience of his research subjects and acknowledged his interview partners in his foreword. These two authors thus acknowledged the biased nature of the sources they employed (explicitly stated by Renton), and took small steps to counteract this. Tabili's complete examination of the households including foreign-born residents in seven census records as well as of naturalisation files showed how the official record could be used creatively to give partial accounts of migrants' experiences. Sources therefore did not prescribe what historical knowledge could be produced. Rather it was the *use* of sources and how they were employed by the historian that was critical for making knowledge about past migrants and minorities.

There was however still as discernible hierarchy between traditional and non-traditional sources. All academics used traditional sources transparently, following strict academic historical methods, referencing sources to enable the checking and contestation of their work by other researchers. However, especially regarding the interviews, Renton and Lawless were less diligent. In Renton's book, the interviews are presented anecdotally alongside documentary and archival sources, without much further commentary, rather than as evidencing wider trends. In Lawless' chapters, often the first few pages seem to draw on a general picture of the issues covered gained from interviews, while the large majority of the chapters drew on newspaper articles and a few other official accounts.

The process of making history and its limitations was focused on specifically in one of the accounts. Absent, apart from limited examples, were migrant and Black and minority

women, as was commentary on this absence. For example, Hackett does not remark on the absence of council's approach to women's work (2009). Only Tabili's examination mentioned the 'wildly disproportionate sex ratios', and dedicated research to exploring migrant and local women's roles (2011, p. 128). Rather than acknowledging that they focused on *male* experiences of migration, most historians, however, claimed to be writing a general history of migration and ethnic minorities in the North East. This thus proposed a version of history, which women were not a part of, and events unfold without their contribution, and without impacting on them. It sent the message that women were not important for the course of history, and universalised male experiences (Scott, 1999).

### **3.5. Positioning academic knowledge in the public sphere**

An investigation of the publicness of these accounts shows how historians situated their knowledge in terms of its wider importance for society, even if not explicitly. This analysis helps to clarify how academic knowledge-making conceptualises its public importance, as well as questioning its public location.

In general, the histories were presented as being of common concern, showing a conception of academic history as 'for all' (Lowenthal, 1996, p. 128). Most themes examined in these accounts related to public issues as traditionally defined. Policy-making and paid employment clearly fell into that category, while the theme of housing also seemed to be considered as public, when approached in terms of the wider patterns (Liddington, 2002). The theme of consumption is often situated on the boundary between public and private, but as it was approached in these histories – with a focus on trade, business and advertising – it could be considered as public. The theme of racism, too, was approached as an issue of public concern.

Several accounts however approached themes that traditional definitions of publicness would exclude, such as personal and cultural identities (Tosh, 2014). Burnett's examination of cultural organisations, for example, approached minority cultural organisations in terms of their integrative role, analysing them in terms of their importance for wider society (2007). Tabili's account too transformed understandings of which issues counted as public or private. She asserted that the relationship between landlords and lodgers 'confounded public and private' (Tabili, 2011, p. 154). Her investigation of women's roles as gatekeepers into local society stated: 'Although most assumed this role informally, their personal choices proved critical to migrants' relations with the state and society' (p. 156), clearly positioning seemingly private relations and decisions as having public import. Her analysis gave several examples of how ostensibly personal and intimate issues have public import. For example, she showed that the marital status of an applicant impacted on naturalisation decisions (ibid., p. 158), and that applicants' personal

lives as well as their wives' behaviours were scrutinised by officials, and played important role in the Home Office's decisions to grant or deny naturalisation applications (p. 159). The investigation of marriage as a form of integration and its importance for the development social and kin networks further clearly stated these issues as public (ibid., p. 156).

Despite the positioning of all histories as of common concern, whether building on traditional or transformed definitions, the intended audiences for all publications were in fact other academics. Liddington has categorised such academic history published in 'highly specialist journals' or as monographs published by academic presses as 'private' history reserved for a small group of other academics, not aimed at the wider public (2002, p. 90). The research discussed above was intended to contribute to academic debates. While it was considered to have a wider significance by some, that was not the authors' main concern. Two interviewees described how to convey this knowledge of the past to non-academics. Historian 4, on the one hand, was concerned about the accessibility of academic texts, stating that she was exploring non-academic ways of writing. She also stressed the need to diversify audiences, and to write for wider audiences to justify the public money invested in research (Historian 4, 2016). In contrast Historian 3 stressed the overriding importance of maintaining a high level of research excellence over reaching a broader audience (Historian 3, 2016). Twells' and Historian 3's differing views on the audience which academic historians should aim for, with Historian 3 stressing excellence and Historian 4 stressing openness, is symptomatic of wider disagreements about the role of academic historians in society, and their own position, as well as their histories' position, in the public sphere.

### **3.6. Effects of knowledge about migrants' and minorities' pasts on present society**

Despite these histories being written for other academics, they can nevertheless be analysed as having effects. The philosopher of history Veronica Tozzi argues that it would be 'implausible and naïve' to think that 'historical interpretations can be ethically neutral' (2018). Hannah Johnson too maintains that historians' writings have implications for writers and readers in the present (2012). While the present investigation does not analyse the specific and tangible impacts, in terms of how the knowledge was received and used by wider societal actors or audiences, the ideas do have effects on the readers, even if just other academics. Furthermore, academic histories are often used and built on by public historians and educators, thus the ideas their work puts forward are disseminated in wider channels, that draw on academic historians as authoritative knowledge-producers (such as, for example, in the Destination Tyneside exhibit,

discussed in the next chapter). It is thus important to investigate the implications of the ideas presented in the academic accounts on migration to Tyneside. This part examines the effects of the historical accounts above on the present, and specifically racism and inequality in the present – even if the publications are predominantly concerned with the past.

One of the main effects analysed is the accounts' contribution to an understanding and analysis of racism and inequality in society. Historians differed in terms of whether they encouraged the reader to distance themselves from racism in the past or whether they promoted understandings that explored readers' own implication within structures of social inequality. Several accounts identified particular actors as having responsibility as political participants in societal developments and specifically in enabling or dismantling racism, while others distanced past racist events from the present, by presenting it as perpetrated by those different and distant from the reader and writer. These different approaches to the study of racism are considered here as effects, since they were either useful or limited in aiding the diagnosis of racism and inequality in the present.

Some academic analyses of racism in work contexts were useful in understanding the role of particular actors and structures in contributing to or counteracting the occurrence of racism. Renton, Jenkinson, Byrne and Tabili all explored the role of trade unions, while Tabili also discussed industry bodies, such as the Board of Trade and the police force, and government legislators in supporting or challenging racism. Lawless and Jenkinson discussed work and union contexts as central to understanding racist clashes and violence in 1919, and in 1930 (Lawless, 1995, p. 74; Jenkinson, 1993). The 1919 riots in South Shields, amongst other ports, were explained by an underlying 'racialist thinking', but similar to later clashes, also had social and economic reasons, especially weak union organisation and representation (Jenkinson, 1993, p. 92). The National Union of Seamen together with the board of trade supported restrictions imposed on 'coloured seamen', leading to further violent outbreaks and disputes in 1930 (Lawless, 1995, p. 100). David Byrne argued that the 1930 dispute was a union issue and could not be described as a 'race riot', stating that 'it is of particular significance in that it illustrates the role of the state, the employers and the official union in using race to defuse a political issue.' (1977, p. 262). He cited unemployment and specific work regulations throughout as an underlying issue, arguing that Arab seamen 'remained vulnerable in periods when competition for jobs was severe, and the general dominance of imperialist ideology in this period served to enhance their vulnerability.' (ibid., 276). Lawless also detailed the actions of individuals and self-styled community representatives in these conflicts. An academic and president of the Western Islamic Association, visited South Shields in March 1930 to support the Arab seamen. In his efforts to maintain good relationships with the authorities, however, he was more interested in appeasing protesters than supporting their cause (Lawless,



1995). These analyses of particular organisations, such as unions or community organisations, and specific economic contexts can help diagnose conflicts in the present, and thus have effects on our understanding of the present situation.

However, other analyses of racism are less useful. Often, even *while* focusing on specific processes and actors, historians discussed racism as an entity. Lawless' description of a 'rising tide of racial hysteria' (Lawless, 1995, p. 3) reified racism – it made it into a phenomenon independent of processes. He stated this *at the same time* as detailing racist actions and opinions. While focusing on particular individuals and events, throughout his book, Renton conceptualised both racism as well as anti-racism as top down attitudes, affirming that 'prejudice has dripped from the top down' (2007, p. 223). In these accounts, actions were shown as having been perpetrated by individuals or groups who are 'other' than 'us' (the reader) in mentality, and whose views and actions were set apart in time from ours (Lawless, 1995; Copsey, 2002; Renton, 2007). Renton's overall argument is that while there was considerable racism within the North East, strong anti-racist and anti-fascist organisation had the potential to combat this (2007, p. 169). In this account, the role of Newcastle as a centre for left-wing politics was central to successful counter-movements against racism (2007, p. 61). While Renton acknowledged the challenge of mapping racism, unsure whether an objective or subjective measure was best, a major part of Renton's research circles around the attempt to map 'structures of welcome' and 'structures of hostility', without resolving the question of how to measure these structures (2007, p. 58). Campaigns were discussed to argue that the

main barrier to racism in Newcastle ... was a culture of organised labour, and this depended on foundations of employment and occupational militancy, which by the late 1970s and early 1980s were in decline (2007, p. 169).

Renton was convinced that a strong anti-racist stance, based in trade union culture was needed to safeguard against racism. He did not admit the possibility of exclusionary attitudes and practices among white trade unionists. Renton's difficulty with 'mapping' racism also revealed that these topics, while presenting a large proportion of the historical content of migration to Tyneside, were under-researched and under-theorised in the wider literature on historic migration in Britain (Panayi, 2010; 1993).

This portrayal of antisemitism and racism as perpetrated by those who are different to us, or as existing independently of human actors, has been criticised as unhelpful in understanding their past and present forms. It can serve to construct an identity based on moral distancing from historical injustice. Indeed, scholars on Antisemitism and anti-Judaism have debated the usefulness of these terms and the need to focus on contingencies in the formation of stereotypes and exclusionary discourses (Nirenberg, 1996; Elukin, 2007; Johnson, 2012). It has been suggested that antisemitism has become reified in historical writings, making it into a thing responsible for violence, prejudice and

discrimination, rather than focusing on how these are created, used and perpetuated by people in societies (Engel, 2009). The use of the concept has also been discussed as a means of distancing the analyst from the events – by marking events and actors as ‘antisemitic’, for example, the writer clearly signals himself or herself as innocent of this charge (Johnson, 2012). This does not allow for a more complex investigation of culpability (Alcoff, 1998). Using the terms ‘antisemitic’ or ‘racist’ is thus easier than analysing the societal framework of racism and sexism, which each person is part of and, depending on who they are, benefit from or not.

Some academics have theorised racism and its relation to work contents more deeply, for example highlighting that unions were also active in racist exclusions. Caroline Bressey remarked on the need to investigate why unionisation eventually ended up supporting white labour by the end of the nineteenth century (Bressey 2010, p. 179). Laura Tabili argued that the conflict between seamen’s unions and colonial subjects needed to be considered the result of a state-led attempt to racialise the workforce, and pragmatic union elites’ efforts to keep their rank and file in order and accept the proposed terms of employment (1995). These analyses have a potentially positive effect on the present, by reminding us that the causes of racism are complex and actors and structural contexts interlinked. They thereby allow for an in-depth diagnosis of the causes of racist occurrences in the present, possibly leading to their dismantling.

The tendency amongst some accounts to implicitly blame minority groups’ ‘difference’ as a key factor in explaining the occurrence of racism on the other hand has negative effects on the present. In some histories, the presence of migrant incomers was portrayed as inevitably leading to conflict. In a short comment at the conclusion of Copsey’s article about antisemitism in Newcastle, he stated that the relative low level of anti-Semitism in Newcastle could be explained by the ‘anglicised and assimilated nature of Newcastle’s Jewish community’ (2002, p. 66). He added that ‘in the years that have followed – and needless to say Newcastle is no different – the more recent arrival of other ethnic minorities has served to further diminish anti-Semitism by removing Jews from the frontlines of racial discrimination’ (Copsey, 2002, p. 66). This comment relied on the idea that a society has a certain amount of hostility to other groups as a matter of course, which is aimed at whoever arrives from the outside and is ‘different’. Sarah Hackett too naturalised hostile responses to migrants, by proposing that the absence of hostility in Newcastle was possibly due to the low number of migrants in the area (2009). Lawless’ statement that ‘probably the most important factor in explaining the decline in prejudice is the assimilation of much of the community into the larger society of South Tyneside and the loss of their Arab and Islamic identity’ follows a similar argument (1995, p. 245). This historical analysis can add to pressure on migrants to assimilate, as it implied that difference brings conflict. If the only context that was represented as changing the

occurrence or strength of racism and antisemitism was the presence of individuals who are different, as in Copsey's statement, suggests that the problem lay with the migrant groups themselves for somehow causing racism to arise, especially with the numbers of (im)migrants that make racism arise or disappear.

Tabili's work on the other hand showed that everyday integration continued during hostile periods, analysing hostility and welcome not as totalising categories, but mundane actions, which co-exist. Her examination of anti-German riots in May 1915, which saw attacks on shops in South Shields, argued that these were 'dis-integrated' and stigmatised citizens of the town (2011, p. 197). The fact that the majority of those who experienced attacks were naturalised British subjects served to complicate relationships of insider and outsiders (2011, p. 195). This history of shifts between integration and dis-integration highlights the importance of the historically contextualised study of racism. As Tabili asserts, 'evidence of interracial solidarity makes no sense when we have reified racial difference as an inevitable source of conflict' (Tabili, 1994, p. 2). Analysing the circumstances under which community relations work and how they break down would be much more helpful in understanding a diverse society in the present too. This can also make the whole society and the state responsible for discussing and enhancing community relations, rather than one group, whose difference is blamed.

While some of these accounts and debates enabled an understanding of racism and inequality in the present, there was little explicit linking of racism, inequality, and the *historical knowledge* produced. However, Tabili considered the impact on wider society if specific historical research is neglected. She criticised approaches that reproduced views of a white British population as a homogeneous group, which non-white migration disrupts. She criticises historians' failure to analyse the construction of difference as contributing to exclusionary understandings of Britishness in the present (2011). She argued that ideas of cultural and ethnic homogeneity can add to expectations of assimilation, which can be reinforced by historians (2011). A more critically informed historical and contextual explanation can make us rethink ethnic and religious differences by showing that parallelism and segregation is not necessary and natural, but rather contingent on specific contexts and regulations (see also Elukin, 2007). Tabili's account, in particular, transforms our relationship to the migration past, because it is analysed as entangled with present structures, rather than separate. In Tabili's interview, when discussing historical structures of racism, she moved the focus on the present and brought the responsibility to *us*. Racism, which existed in the past, was considered as still part of our present. For her, the structural analysis of the past lead to a 'we ought to'.

Historical knowledge-making was also considered as having effects on social relations in the present. The making of histories was not only considered to convey informed understanding, research also attested *importance* and the value of the subjects

researched. In interviews, historians voiced opinions about the way academics create images and contest who was important in the past, and who was *valued* (Historian 1, 2016; Historian 2, 2016). In several interviews the conviction of the importance of studying the history of migrants and minorities was articulated in terms of an obligation to recover the lives and experiences of people who had lived in the past. Several historians maintained that their research was about making these people's voices heard (Historian 1, 2016), asserting their presence as important (Historian 2, 2016) and identifying and critically appraising previously neglected voices, and contested or conflicted experiences (Historian 3, 2016).

I was astonished, (...) that even academics would say to me "These people are just not important. ... they are a complete sidenote." And I don't believe this to be the case, I think we need to challenge ... kind of master-narratives of history, and try and bring in more diverse understanding of who's played a role in the past. (Historian 2, 2016)

I feel so strongly that certain things have been neglected in the academy. And voices (...) that haven't been heard, and I think immigrants just haven't been heard at all, they've been overlooked, maligned, they're being maligned again, you know, in the United States and in Europe. (Historian 1, 2016)

These statements consider research important in terms of what is known about people in the past – who is considered or *valued* as actors. These reasons for undertaking historical research challenge current exclusions in the historical discipline. Crucially, as the quote from Historian 1 suggests, they also make a connection between how people in the past are represented – or not represented – in historical accounts and how people in the present are – or are not – recognised and valued. They thus have clear political implications, involving a critical analysis both of academic scholarship and of attitudes current in present society.

Interviewees also specified political aspects of knowledge-making about the past in terms of the actors involved in making decisions about research. The histories were produced by individuals, who were supported by a wider infrastructure of universities, archives and funders, all part of established knowledge infrastructures. In interviews, Historian 1, Historian 4 and Historian 5 voiced unease at the lack of diversity within academic institutions, while Historian 3 argued that there was

a place for that level of scholarship that helps us to understand ... the things that we can then later take out into different contexts, so both functions, I think are ... to generate new insights amongst a community that is highly trained and highly skilled and understands those new insights. (Historian 3, 2016)

Historian 5 shared this concern for training and special skills but was concerned that academic historians remain 'all too similar', resulting in a 'narrow social perspective' (2016). Historian 1 expressed the view that the academy needed to be further democratised to represent a more diverse set of voices. Two of the academics also voiced

the idea that groups, or 'a collaboration' are the best to write history (Historian 5, 2016; Historian 4, 2016).

This section on effects showed that several of the historic accounts facilitated an understanding of racism and inequality in the present, some identifying the social and political actors and structures that can dismantle or reproduce racism. The academic perspective vaguely linked these structures to knowledge-making about the past, with some asserting that academic research placed importance on specific people, such as migrants, in the past, thereby placing importance on migrants in the present. The decision-making about what knowledge about the past was important in the cases examined remained with established institutions and funders, with interviewees voicing concern about their exclusionary nature.

## **Summary**

This chapter presented and analysed the findings of academic historians' work and perspectives on migration to the North East of England. The analysis of interviews with historians as well as their research outputs showed the ways academic research forges relationships between the past and the present. The historian Laura Tabili's work in particular offers a distinct approach throughout the chapter in all issues investigated here. She critically reflected on her own position in history, content of knowledge produced, its publicness and effects, and conducted her research based on these reflections. The section on motivations showed that the most commonly presented argument for the importance of research into the past concerned the desire to foster critical thinking and reflection on the relationship between past and present, but focused on their teaching more than publications. While several interviewees highlighted the role of their political and ethical convictions for their research, only one of them explicitly discussed the past as fundamental for her personal life. Most interviewees considered their historical research to be detached from themselves and their personal identities. The chapter then examined how academics produced histories, showing that primary sources allowed the investigation of external issues of housing, work, policies, hostilities, organised community identities, while being more restricted in detailing experiences of migration from the personal perspectives of migrants themselves. In all histories examined here, the use of documentary evidence was central to their work. It was the methods used that signified the studies as academic 'histories'. These methods, however, also restricted knowledge-making about women, a point only highlighted by Tabili. Historical knowledge from migrants' own perspective was also very limited by these methods, falling into a wider pattern where power structures impact on historical experiences as well as knowledge about those experiences.

Based on her understanding of the past and the present as connected, Tabili employed precise historical methods while highlighting the political nature of history-making and the exclusions that the uncritical application of strict methodology bring in terms of content. The section on the positioning of knowledge argued that all accounts presented the knowledge produced as public, but the publication of the histories in highly exclusive and inaccessible formats, as well as the use of academic language set limitations on the actual reach of the research findings. The final section discussed the impact of the examined academic histories on the present, arguing that some historical accounts had the effect of distancing readers from events, making others responsible for racism past and present. Some of these accounts also suggest that difference led to conflict, resulting in the stigmatising of 'difference' and naturalisation of racism. Others assigned specific responsibility for combating racism onto particular actors in past and present, whether they were trade unions, policy-makers or historians themselves. While some of these also discussed structures at the basis of people's and groups' actions, only Tabili strongly proposed a structural connection between the past and the present, highlighting, both through her analysis and practice, that historical structures that supported racism persisted into the present. Finally, some argued in interviews that the focus of research conveyed ideas of the relative importance of different topics, thus signifying certain actors and their experiences as more valuable than others, an issue also relevant in terms of the make-up of the institutions authorised to take these decisions. This too had a structural component, as it was connected to institutionalised knowledge, and has distinct relevance for the methodologies and epistemologies of academic history.

## **4. THE MUSEUM PERSPECTIVE ON MIGRATION TO TYNESIDE**

### **Introduction**

UK museums have followed academic historians by introducing exhibitions and displays of migration histories, as well as exploring their institutions' relationships – or lack of these – with minority groups. This chapter analyses how the Destination Tyneside exhibition at the Discovery Museum in Newcastle creates and represents knowledge of past and present regional migration. After setting the context within UK museums' treatment of migration histories in section one, the chapter explores, through interviews, how museum professionals conceive of their and the museum's role in developing societal engagements with the past, especially in Tyneside. Part three charts the development of the Destination Tyneside gallery through published accounts and interviews. The fourth section analyses the process of knowledge-making about the past, exploring the media and sources used in the exhibition. The next section discusses how the display positions the knowledge produced and its claims about the publicness of accounts of migration. It then discusses what the effects of the ideas and practices of this knowledge-making are in an unequal present. Through an investigation of the Discovery Museum and the Destination Tyneside gallery, this chapter asks how the migrant stories in the gallery shape knowledge about life together in the present.

The exhibition was chosen for its prominence as a permanent exhibition in a large and well-attended regional museum. Four museum professionals were interviewed; those involved in the curation of the migration exhibit as well as outreach officers who work with groups outside the museum. They were recruited using information sheets sent via email, as well as through personal contacts and collaborators on the BAM! Sistahood project. The interviews enquired about the curation of the Destination Tyneside exhibition, the role of the past in society, and professionals' experiences of collaboration with external partners. This examined the professionals' understanding of community collaborations and exhibitions and as well as their positioning within the institution.

### **4.1. Context: Museum representations of migration**

The public portrayal of migration and racialised groups' history in the UK and its development over the past decades sheds light on the different narratives and themes that are memorialised, and how Destination Tyneside fits within these. Several motivations lie behind portrayals of migration history in museums, such as to represent

the area they are situated in more fully, to offer historical perspectives on current debates, and to draw in new audiences.

Analysts of museum history ask how specific migration galleries position migrants and their experiences within a national 'historical consciousness' (Hintermann and Johansson, 2010, p. 7). Museums have a role in the shaping of public narratives about society and the nation (Assmann, 2011; Bennett, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). They can convey comforting images about continuity and belonging (Lidchi, 1997; Hobsbawm, 1982) but they can also reconfigure and challenge public narratives and established stories (Kidd, 2014; Lynch, 2014; Littler and Naidoo, 2005; Hall, 1997; Yuval-Davis, 2012). Permanent migration displays are analysed as important signals that immigration is seen as a significant part of a society, rather than a separate story (Ang, 2009). But separate displays on migration have been criticised as not questioning the distinction between "Other" and "One of Us" (Merriman, Poovaya-Smith, 1996).

Questions about the shaping of museum content, and museums' role in defining boundaries of who belongs, are also influenced by economic and policy developments. The UK policy conception of culture and art as industries and their link with profitability has been highlighted as problematic (Stevenson *et al*, 2010; Loosely, 2011). Researchers have raised concerns about pressures on museums to provide services to customers, and to compete with other leisure activities. It has been argued that this role is fulfilled 'potentially at the expense of other functions' (McPherson, 2006). Economic considerations are thus seen as playing a role in museums' content development as well as in approaches to audiences as private consumers or public citizens.

Migration displays in museums follow several different models, often changing in line with cultural and academic trends (De Wildt, 2015; Ross, 2015). In the 1980s, cultural diversity and multiculturalist approaches, based on celebratory notions of culture as dress, foods and festivals, started defining policy (Panayi, 2010). Critics have highlighted that within multiculturalist policies, structural economic inequality was largely neglected (Buettner, 2008; Hesse, 2000; Littler and Naidoo, 2005). An example for this celebratory approach is the Black History Month that has existed since 1987, one commemoration month a year dedicated to the 'national celebration of the history of the Black presence in Britain' (Panayi, 2010, p. 9). Tony Kushner argues that a ghettoised celebratory Black History month perpetuates exclusionary practices in mainstream public institutions (Kushner, 2006). In UK museums, an exhibition called 'The Peopling of London' at the Museum of London in 1993, showing the long history of migration to London, was a landmark in exhibiting migration and ethnic minority histories in public (Ross, 2014), though as with many other migration displays, this was temporary (Gouriévidis, 2014; Littler, 2005). From the 2000s on, some displays aimed to integrate the narratives of people of different ethnicities, classes and genders by focusing on personal stories (De Wildt, 2015). Oral



testimony and personal experiences have often been privileged approaches, with the giving of voice and the making visible of previously forgotten experiences used as an attempt to further inclusion, but also a result of the lack of material sources (Gouriévidis, 2014, p. 10). The Museum of London has continued developing special exhibitions on London's multi-ethnic past, leading to a permanent display on Modern London (Gouriévidis, 2014; Ross, 2015). This display moved away from focusing on groups' histories separately, and takes a 'sense of place' approach concentrating on London's special cross-cultural experiences (Ross, 2015). A few UK museums have developed exhibitions with a global history approach, which, for example, interrogate the role of Britain as a colonial power and show historical and contemporary global interconnections between countries and cultures (Ross, 2015; Poovaya-Smith, Merriman, 1996).

A set of recent histories in society has aimed to challenge preconceptions of who 'Black history' was about. The BBC documentary *Black and British* aimed to reframe the history of Black people in Britain as a constitutive part of the country's history, with segments on Roman soldiers of African descent and especially evidence of long-term settlements of people born abroad to show continuity rather than rupture. In a scene about an African Caribbean man who settled in London in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the question about the whereabouts of his descendants is answered by a light-skinned man listing them:

Francis had a son called Isaac, Isaac had a son called Enoch, Enoch had a son called Edward, Edward had a son called Norman and Norman had a son called Cedric and that's me. And it's as direct as that. ('First Encounters', 2016)

The effect of this is similar to Roshi Naidoo's description of a walking tour of Black London she undertook with students, where the guide spoke about the sizeable Black population of Georgian London. When the students realised that the descendants of this Black population became the present population of London, they started to rethink their own relationship to this past, considering the possibility that it was *their* immediate past too (Naidoo, 2005).

Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM) connects the archive and museum service in Tyneside. The service manages 9 sites, out of which two are Roman excavations, three are art galleries and four are local and regional history museums (including one with natural and ethnographic displays) and one is a Railway museum. The Discovery Museum is managed by TWAM, on behalf of Newcastle City Council. It is a regional museum, with a large collection of scientific and technical material, as well as collections on maritime, social and regimental history (The Discovery Museum, 2014). It houses displays on the history of local industries, with the steamship *Turbinia* in the entrance hall and permanent galleries on 'The Story of the Tyne', 'Working Lives', 'A Soldier's Story' and 'Innovations'. It is a family-friendly museum and has several dedicated spaces for children.

## 4.2. Museum motivations

Interviews with museum professionals as well as corporate documents illuminated how the museum and the people working in it view the importance of the past in present-day society and the role of the museum in representing and communicating that past. One curator as well as three outreach officers at the Discovery Museum were interviewed individually in sessions lasting between one and two hours. The interviews showed how staff perceived their roles as professionals, and how their work reflected the aims and mission stated by the museum's documents. They situated themselves as agents within institutions, directed and sometimes constrained by institutional or organisational concerns. The interviewees discussed this work not as static nor perfectly realised, but a process, and threw light on museum work as something in development.

Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums' Corporate plan stated its mission, vision and commitment as follows:

Our mission is to help people determine their place in the world and define their identities, so enhancing their self-respect and their respect for others. (Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, nd, p. 2)

At TWAM, we believe that we:

- make a positive difference to people's lives
- inspire and challenge people to explore their world

(Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, nd, p. 2)

Reflecting this mission statement, each interviewee asserted the conviction that the museum was a place for people and their stories. Interestingly, these assertions hardly mentioned the past, also notably absent from the mission statement above. One of the outreach officers explained that what interested him in the job was that 'It was about working with people, and essentially, ... working with people to tell stories.' (Museum 4, 2016). Others echoed this idea and stated 'Actually, what we're trying to do is we want to have some benefit to people's lives, (...) – ... we use these collections as a tool, but it very much is community development work.' (Museum 2, 2016). These responses presented the museum as a facilitator for people to explore their *own* stories. There was a clear sense that the collections should be used to make 'positive difference to people's lives', as stated in the corporate plan. The museum professionals' statements about the importance of people's stories chimed with the mission statement 'to help people determine their place in the world, so enhancing their self-respect.' This reflected a general trend within museums and museum studies that see museums as places for communities (Watson, 2007; Crooke, 2007).

A relationship with the past was discussed by interviewees in differing ways, with some considering it as explicitly connected to their lives in the present. One outreach officer mentioned the role of knowledge of the past in 'anchoring' people. For her, knowing about her own past and her family gave her a sense of comfort and stability, describing the past as a 'psychological comforter', continuing:

in knowing where you've come from, and stuff from before you can even remember, or were even born. (...) I think it's also because I'm kind of, quite proud of my grandfather, he was a baker, and my dad and the family, they still run the bakery, and I think that it's amazing, that it's such a community service that they provide. (Museum 2, 2016)

Her pride in her grandfather and the family bakery was both related to the fact that it was an important service as well as that the family still provided this service. Her statements indicated the positive impact a link with events and people from the past can have on people in the present. While her examples spoke of very personal links, she also expressed that in the absence of personal connections 'collectively you can have the history from ... the area that you live in ... so I think there's other ways that you can feel anchored' (Museum 2, 2016). This was about 'helping people determine their place in the world', either through family continuity, or through using wider reference points, such as areas, or otherwise defined collectives. The interviewee left it open what these could be but stressed that these connections with the past were emotionally stabilising for individuals in the present. Another interviewee too stated that 'I do feel quite strongly that I'm from the North East and feel a commitment to telling that story of ... all of those stories, I guess.' (Museum 1, 2016). Her colleague too stated the importance of a connection to the past, while specifically emphasising it as a standpoint to critically engage with the world around her:

I think that one should really read between the lines, develop a critical approach to what you're being told and always use your instincts and your life experiences and your, kind of, cultural heritage, or your roots in order to respond to things. Because in that way at least you have a voice, you can have a real voice ... actually knowing that is quite empowering. (Museum 3, 2016)

For her, the 'anchoring' the other officer discussed provided a standpoint for questioning and engaging critically with her social situation. Throughout the interview, she stressed the importance of questioning the ways we can know about the past, and the need to be critical of versions of history we get told. Her colleague on the other hand asserted

I am proud of where I'm from, in England, I'm proud of what people would describe as like, a heritage that I have, which is English Irish, but it's like I'm not gonna start waving a flag about it. I think ...is it important? ... So, in one sense it is important. But I'm not using that for anything, to justify ...why I'm doing the things that I do. (Museum 4, 2016)

Through this statement, he acknowledged that his personal connection to the past was somewhat important, but also negated that it played a role in any of his commitments,

work or politics. The curator had an approach that relativised her personal background. She however did not see this as simple, but as something requiring a strategy to become aware of her own biases and convictions as well as to be transparent about them in her work:

I try, as a curator, to be aware of my own beliefs and be transparent about that, ... there's things that I feel passionately about, so social justice I am interested in and so ... think it'd be really hard to say that I could just walk into the museum and ... not bring any of that in, but I suppose, what you hope is that through your training and work in the museum, you're aware of your biases, whatever they are and try to be transparent about them.  
(Museum 1, 2016)

Her statements echo various academics' proposals for the *New Museum* as a place for social justice (Sandell, 2002; Sandell and Nightingale, 2012; Lynch, 2013; Smith, Cubitt, Fouseki, Wilson, 2011), as well as the need for museum staff to be aware of and transparent about their biases (Morse *et al.*, 2013).

One of the outreach officers was particularly critical of uses of the past that tried to justify the present by relying on a sense of rootedness for their actions or thoughts. Rather, his aim was to question everything. He asserted that the value of remembrance was about dealing with the complexities in past and present. His observations were very similar to some of the academic historians' statements about using knowledge about the past as an intellectual resource for critical thinking and action. For him, the work was using objects from the collection as tools 'to question the world they live in. That's (...) the basics of what I do.' (Museum 4, 2016). He expressed ideas about critical engagement from an outside position, as explicitly disconnected from the past. He stated that museums were 'obsessed with objects and with the past', adding that 'we're getting lost in it, constantly looking back to something' (Museum 4, 2016). Two other interviewees expressed ideas of the use of the past as a tool to engage with the present. For one of the outreach officers, however, this was not a detached position, but connected to her positioning *within* history. She saw positive and negative experiences or knowledge about the past as guiding present actions:

I think with the knowledge that we've had from the last ... I don't know ... hundreds of years, we're not using that to the best of our abilities, really ... applying that to the best of our abilities ... So, we have to kindof think about learning from the way we've... things have been done in the past and try not to replicate that. Or try and do things in a way that's more equal, the way, it treats people fairly, that's, where we live in a world that's like a better world. (Museum 3, 2016)

While this viewed knowledge of the past as guiding the present, building on the interviewee's position within the course of time, the interviewed curator stated knowledge about the past as providing a distance and contextualised view the past could shed on present issues, especially as 'in the media, migration is presented as new thing, people are afraid if because it's new, different, or more'. She stressed the importance for 'people

to look back beyond their memory' and for museums to 'show the long story, more context, longer-term', to add to public debate (Museum 1, 2016). This very much echoed John Tosh's concern with context and a limited historical awareness in media representations of current issues (2008).

The vision for the migration exhibition embraced this contextualising role of knowledge of the past. Its specific ambition was 'to show that Tyneside could not have become what it is without migration, to hold up a mirror to Tyneside' and proposed five aims:

- To engage in an informed way with contemporary migration by promoting an historical perspective.
- To encourage people to debate migration and identity.
- To promote tolerance, alter perceptions on immigration and contribute to social cohesion by increasing understanding of the migrant experience.
- To undertake an enabling role to show how the North East can respond to and benefit from migration.
- To show that Tyneside's history and identity is not fixed or immutable, we have always been an open society (Little, 2013, p. 2).

For the Destination Tyneside curator, this exhibition served to contextualise the present and to show that the area has always changed (Museums 1, 2016). The statement proposed that an historical perspective was missing from debates about migration. An improved historical understanding of migration was however also aimed at promoting tolerance, a moral commitment, in line with the museum's social justice commitment (Little, 2013).

The interviews and the corporate mission statement highlighted the importance of the museum as a place for people to enquire into the personal and wider present, with the past rarely mentioned by the interviewees. The past was not at all referred to in the general museum aims, but it was discussed in the specific Destination Tyneside documentation. All museum workers expressed ideas about museums as spaces for stories. They also mentioned a need to challenge dominant narratives, and the aim to convey a message as a museum. This mix of a concern with present debates and with people's personal sense of belonging was also present in the Destination Tyneside exhibition.

#### **4.3. Case study: The *Destination Tyneside* gallery**

In 2010, the Discovery Museum collaborated with Durham University academics to evaluate visitors' engagement with the museum and propose possible strategies to ensure their mission statement's commitment to be 'totally inclusive' (TWAM Corporate Plan, 2010-15). The 'Participatory Re-visioning at Discovery' found that most visitors had a

strong emotional connection to the place and to the identity of the North East, and that their expectation of the museum and of visiting Discovery was to cement this identity and impart it to the younger generation (Little, 2013). The research also found that social, cultural and physical barriers prevented certain members of the community, especially BME and socially marginalised young people, from visiting the museum. The idea to create a migration gallery in the museum to reflect more diverse voices and provide narratives for these sections of the community aimed to address these concerns (Little, 2013, p. 2).

The display was produced by the staff at Discovery Museum, working with academics, and some other input from outside the museum. The idea of an approach that focused on personal characters emerged after the museum director and a member of the senior management team had visited an exhibition in Bremerhaven, Germany, about emigration. That museum, which had recently won European Museum of the Year award, used a personal approach to foster empathy, immersing the visitor in the display (Little and Watson, 2015). One of the museum's curators then developed a proposal for an immigration gallery, which was approved by senior management (Museum 1, 2016). The main funder for the exhibition's historic elements was the DCMS Wolfson foundation, while HLF Our Heritage funding was obtained to contribute specifically to the contemporary display and engagement work. The whole gallery was turned over in 18 months.

The curation team undertook individual consultations with academics from the regional universities at Sunderland, Northumbria and Newcastle as well as a community cohesion officer at Newcastle City Council. Two outreach officers were employed part-time for 6 months to develop content for the contemporary gallery, working with BME communities and recording oral histories (Museum 1, 2016). University lecturers made recommendations on two of the historic individuals (Ali Said and Ann Montgomery) represented in the gallery (Museum 1, 2016), and a Newcastle academic created an installation for the exhibition.

The gallery, provisionally titled *The Making of Modern Tyneside*, replaced a fashion gallery on the top floor of the museum. It opened in July 2013 with the final title *Destination Tyneside*. It is the only permanent migration gallery in the region. The exhibition was developed both from archival material already held by TWAM, and contemporary material, collected as part of the exhibition creation process.

When entering the exhibition space, the visitor is greeted by a quote, stating:

“The exile is free to land upon our shores and free to perish of hunger beneath our inclement skies.” – Chartist, 1844.

The first part tells six migrants' stories from the 1840s to the 1900s, the second discusses post-1945 migration. Six historical characters were developed from available records,

research previously conducted by the museum and earlier projects (Museum 1, 2016). The curator chose characters based on several criteria. They were to represent the biggest and most significant migrant groups during their time, while work, gender and age also played a role in the decision. Their stories were told mainly through life sized video figures that tell the visitor about their lives at two points in the exhibition, first at the entrance, and then later in a cinema space. They were based on real historical people from the past. The video figures told scripted narratives, a few of them curated together with descendants of the actual historical people the characters were based on. Some of the text was also based on documentary evidence, where available, such as letters written to a newspaper, and a memoir. The first-person approach was taken to 'engender an immediate and emotional connection to the stories being told' (Little, 2013, p. 3). Throughout the exhibition, phrases invite the visitor to step into the migrants' shoes. A large text panel before entering the cinema explicitly suggests: 'Imagine leaving home. Imagine not knowing if you will return to you family again. Imagine building your life somewhere new.'

The characters include Ann Ferguson who left Ireland as a child in 1866. In South Tyneside, she got married to an Ulster protestant and became Ann Montgomery. She was among the founders of Hebburn Orange Lodge and Hall. Thomas Murphy left Ireland in 1874 with his wife and son. 27 years after his arrival, he was working in the chemical works in Jarrow. Jack Lawson left Cumbria in 1890 as a 9-year-old. He went to University and after coming back to Boldon and working as a miner, he became a Member of Parliament for Chester-Le-Street, and later, in 1945, Secretary of State for War. Ali Said left Aden, Yemen in 1898, to work on a steamship and opened a boarding house for Yemeni sailors around 1909. He was accused of being involved in a 'riot' in 1930 and was deported to Yemen. Angela Marcantonio left Italy to join her husband in Newcastle in 1904. They opened an ice cream shop, which became very successful and still exists under the name of Mark Toney's. Lena Vinberg left Poland in 1874 with her husband to flee antisemitic persecution. They planned to take the ship to America, but instead arrived in Newcastle and settled in the Westend.

A large information wall provides regional historical context to the information that the individual characters presented. This wall displays historians' quotes, historical photographs and newspaper articles from the archive. A big glass case at the end of this wall, divided into six sections, shows material from the archive and museum's collection connected to the historic character. Each section contains both objects and sources directly related to the particular individual, as well as connected to their ethnic and religious group, locality, or work. Lena Vinberg's case, for example shows a photograph of her son, David Vyner, in his shop and his tailor's scissors. Jack Lawson's case exhibits objects related to his work as a miner, such as a helmet and a miner's lamp. Two objects

in Thomas' case are related to the chemical works: a photo of a chemical factory and a chemistry factory's wages book, and Angela Marcantonio's case contains a photo of an ice cream van and ice cream glasses. Ali Said's case shows the documents linked to his involvement with the union, the Seamen's Minority Movement. There were photographs of two of the individual characters, Jack Lawson and Ann Montgomery, and one of the Marcantonio family. Relevant census records were displayed in each case. Most other objects are related to the migrants' traditions, national, religious and ethnic group, rather than specifically to the characters. In a cinema space, the video figures tell the visitor about their lives since they arrived, with their narratives often connected to the themes the material objects cover.

The second part of the exhibition then focuses on contemporary migration to Tyneside. A large wall shows a world map and a quote by historian Marlou Schrover stating 'Few people in the world need to go back further than three generations in their family tree to stumble upon a migrating ancestor.' The second section also includes a digital installation entitled *Sit with Me*, which was produced by a Newcastle University Culture Lab academic. It is a large dark case with a recessed digital screen, which the visitor looks at through a semi-transparent mirror. It invites visitors to sit and look at the screen which displays portraits and descriptions of migrants to Tyneside, while the visitor's face is also reflected in the mirror.

The underlying narrative of the contemporary gallery is the idea of 'super-diversity', with exhibit text emphasising: 'Britain is characterised by "super-diversity". Migrants now come from a much greater range of countries. Newcastle's population is more diverse than ever before.' This part of the gallery also employs display cases with objects, photos and texts, plus two small video screens, displaying interviews with six migrants and the son of a migrant. Text panels discuss the imperial background of migration in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with information on commonwealth migration in the 1920s and 30s, unemployment in the North East, colonial soldiers fighting in the Second World War, including a photo of the hostel where they stayed in Newcastle. The displays also include a number of cases with cultural and religious objects from the museum collection, providing information about cultural celebrations as well as shops and restaurants opened by migrants, selling international food.

Featured in the videos are Irfan Asghar who tells the story of his father, Mohammed, who migrated to Newcastle from Pakistan in the 1960s. Mohammed Ashgar and his brothers set up what became a very successful shop. Bahal Singh Dhindsa was born in India, lived in Uganda for part of his life, but came to the UK as a refugee in 1972 when his family was expelled from Uganda. He settled in Gateshead with his family and received an MBE for his community work. Shirin Hussain moved to Newcastle from Bangladesh in the 1980s with her husband and young son. Peter Cheng came from Hong Kong and settled in



Newcastle in the 1960s, where he opened a restaurant and later a supermarket. Dr James Yu moved to Newcastle in the late 1990s to study and stayed after getting married. In addition to his academic work at the University, he supports international students there. Anna Kurkiewicz moved to Newcastle from Poland in 2005, with her daughter joining her a year later. Gugu Dube moved to the UK from Zimbabwe to study nursing, but applied for asylum when the political situation in Zimbabwe made it impossible for her to return.

#### 4.4. Making knowledge in the exhibition

The making of knowledge about the past was founded on the mission statement for the gallery:

To engage in an *informed* way with contemporary migration by promoting *an historical perspective*.

(Little, 2013, p. 2, emphasis added)

The knowledge presented in the exhibition underpinned the idea that *contrary to public opinion*, migration was an important part of British and Tyneside history. The information in the exhibition was not presented in a moralised tone, but ‘neutrally’, conveying information without a direct narrative thread. Information was primarily highlighted through display text size, with some quotes or figures featuring more prominently than others; through the use of selected objects with labels to convey meaning. Lawson has analysed this choice to provide facts rather than argument as an attempt on museums’ parts to *seem* neutral (Lawson, 2003). The different elements of the exhibition used diverging methods of making and representing this more informed history of past migration to Tyneside. The making of knowledge however was also influenced by the curator’s and the management team’s aim for the exhibition to personally engage visitors through first-person narratives (Little, 2013).

The sources utilised for the content development of the historic characters’ video figures resulted in the discussion of themes of work, tradition and belonging. Knowledge about a variety of experiences was represented, based on evidence from collections and archives. This, for example, displayed how some of the migrants adapted to the new society. Lena’s case showed a deed of her son’s name change to Vyner in 1922. Angela’s family too changed the name of their successful ice cream parlour to Mark Toney’s, as ‘Antonio thought we would be better accepted with a more English sounding name’. Angela’s wish to maintain ties with her home town was also supported by information on the family’s holiday home in Italy. Information about where historic characters lived, from the censuses, were sometimes referred to in the narrative accounts. In Ann’s case, for example, the census shows she had fourteen children – and her situation living with the majority of them was reflected in the narrative her video figure tells.

Two of the narratives were partly based on text produced by the historic characters themselves. Much of Lawson's script was based on his memoir *A man's life*, in particular, the portrayal of Boldon as a very diverse place (Renton, 2007, p. 59). Jack Lawson told us about his marriage to Isabella, who was of Spanish and Irish descent. He described this as characteristic of the town Boldon, where he had settled, 'a real mix of accents, dialects and languages. Yet we consider ourselves very much to be Durham men.' Jack Lawson's narrative mainly expands on his involvement with the union and the Labour party. Ali Said's text was a mixture of new script and pieces of his writing. His responses to racist views of the Yemeni seamen in South Shields during the First World War was based on letters he wrote to the Shields Gazette, letting him state in the narrative: 'Men of the Yemen, for whom some have such contempt, I would point out, are all British subjects'.

Several factors constrained the making of knowledge, such as limitations of museum collections, especially concerning migration material. The curator stated that 'what we have in the collections can also be a factor in determining what stories we are able to tell, and that was a challenge with migration, because we didn't have a lot of tangible material' (Museum 1, 2016). The choice to rely on 'AV and things' was a result of the collection's limitations (Museum 1, 2016), facing many migration galleries (Gouriévidis, 2014). The disparity between the sources available and the aim to display personal narratives to foster empathy, led to gaps between sources and the representation of historical knowledge being filled by the curatorial team, in collaboration with some of the migrants' descendants. The process of giving voice was described by the curator simply as 'we worked with the families to create materials and create stories' (Museum, 2016). An academic historian provided several of the historical sources (also on display) for the creation of Ann Montgomery's narrative (Historian 6, 2017).

This giving of voice enabled to tell the story of migration through personal experiences. For example, several objects in the glass case connected to the historic characters were related to work and most work-based narratives were based on these sources. The first-person narratives then also discussed the *meaning* of work for the migrants. Thomas, for example stated:

For me and many of my Irish neighbours, the Jarrow chemical works has put food on our table for years. And I'm grateful for it.

This statement asserted knowledge of Thomas' feelings about his work. The narratives also presented the lived experiences and the meaning of migrants' cultural identities, providing a narrative for the cultural objects in the display cases. Angela's case, while mainly including objects and photographs related to her business is also organised around an Italian theme, displaying a photo of a tenement building where many Italians lived, photo album of the son of another Italian immigrant. In the narrative, Angela voiced worry about losing her 'Italian way of life.' Lena Vinberg stated she was content that there

was a place for her children to 'be schooled in our traditions'. This was stated as contributing to Lena and her husband 'soon (feeling) at home'. These narrative strategies portrayed historic people's experiences from their own perspective, despite the dearth of evidence of first-person accounts.

Another strategy used to gain personal insights into lived experience were through oral histories with contemporary migrant. Outreach officers in the interviews emphasised museums as a place for people's stories. One specifically described how she saw people's accounts as contributing to historical understanding. She stated that she found people's stories about the same event fascinating:

There's just these slight variations here and there in terms of what they remember or maybe what they experienced. I think all of that adds to having a richer understanding of whatever that thing was that happened. ... I really love that idea, that layered, the way history is decided on, who decides on what and how does that come about and what different layers are there to that. (Museum 2, 2016)

The contemporary characters' video displays let migrants speak for themselves. Through the accounts based on their personal experiences, the display showed contemporary characters' changing feelings about the new place they settled in and about 'home'. Shirin said

For me, home will be always Bangladesh, but then again, Newcastle is my second home, I would say, because when I go back to Bangladesh, sometimes I feel that I don't belong there anymore, it's more like I'm other side of the home now. I'm physically there, so when I go, I feel like I'm on a holiday, ... a guest, you stay there for two weeks, three weeks, and deep down you know you have to come back home, Newcastle, where my children, my husband .... Everything about me belongs here now, I don't have anything over there, it's sad, but ... it's a decision you make, it's not my street anymore, it's not my house, it's just it doesn't belong to me, I don't feel sense of belonging.

Shirin also described the loneliness she felt when she first arrived. Gugu talked about how happy she was that she came to Newcastle 'I have friends who have become family, I am settled within the community and really, when I visit other places I feel I miss home and half the time it's not Africa, but Newcastle.' James said 'I always treat Newcastle as my hometown, in this country.' Irfan discussed his father's similarly conflicting feelings about where home is. In 2007, after having lived in Newcastle for about 40 years, Irfan's father said to him that he was thinking about building the family a house in Pakistan. Irfan asked his father 'Do you ever see yourself and Mum settle in Pakistan?' to which his father responded 'You know what, son, you're right, I don't think I can settle in Pakistan now. You're right, there's no point.' The contemporary characters discussed belonging in a more mixed way, where they pondered on changes in feelings of home and belonging, most asserting Newcastle as the place where they feel at home (James, Gugu, Shirin), and mentioning that their places of origin had become distant (Irfan, talking about his

father). Shirin's elaborate explanation shows the difficulty of describing an intimate feeling like 'home'.

The installation *Sit with Me* gave voice to documentary evidence without filling the gaps left in the official record, stating that we can only know, if evidence 'survives': 'The words you will read about them survive in the official records: their registration cards, their obituaries, their biographies and their employment contracts.' Descriptions from registration cards, obituaries, biographies or employment contracts appeared and disappeared on a video screen, alongside the photo of the person described. This, for example, conveyed information about Barbara Tevkik through only the words 'daughter and wife, British born, widow, enemy alien by marriage'. Antonio Marcantonio, Angela's husband, was described here as 'naturalised', showing that national identifications can change over time. The accompanying text for the installation, written by a curator, drew on these records to state the variety of roles and categories the migrants belonged to, calling them migrants, daughters, mothers, sons, husbands, enemies, aliens, employers, labourers, criminals, leaders, as well as Tynesiders.

These strategies utilised to fill gaps in the historic records encompassed several limitations. One of the outreach officers described the difficulties of the giving of voice, especially to marginalised groups. In her experience of working with people from the mental health community, attempts to create stories from the official records available proved difficult. One of the collaborators explained: "these people have never had a voice and now you're asking me to use my voice to give them a voice which is like a, kind of like another layering of oppression" ... so we had to, we're in the process of working out how we tell the stories, how we tell these stories, that doesn't further oppress.' (Museum 3, 2016).

The assigning of a representative function to individual characters was acknowledged as a problem by the exhibition curator, who commented that

I'm aware of that issue of – people see one story and ... we never intended, you know "Here's a Jewish woman's story, her story represents every single Jewish person's story" and that's the flipside of using personal stories to engender empathy that you risk people thinking, that is the experience of all people from that country or culture or what have you, and that's not the case. So, I suppose it's that sort of conflict. (Museum 1, 2016).

Fouseki has shown that actors asked by museums to stand in as representatives for groups find this role difficult (2010), hinting at the problems of representing a group through one exemplary character. The impression that personal and collective identity were identical was reinforced by the choice of objects that supplemented the personal narratives of the historical characters. Lena's case is focused around her Jewishness, and displays a photo of a synagogue, sabbath candlesticks, prayer book, a pedlar figurine, a photo of the house they lived in (taken forty years later), and a mezuzah, but also a pestle

and mortar belonging to Russian Jewish immigrants. Thomas's case showed mainly Catholic items, a rosary, a medal of the Pope from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a Catholic prayer book. In Ann Montgomery's case, this is specifically connected to Orangeism, because of her role as a founder of the Hebburn Orange Lodge. The case is mainly filled with objects and documentation of the Orange Order and Oranges Lodges. Ali Said's case showed a photo of the Mosque in South Shields. The characters' narratives claimed the importance of these traditions for themselves and their family. The display thus proclaimed identity categories for the historic characters without leaving space for ambiguities (Porter, 1996) – such as questions about the potentially changing relationship of the characters to their respective religion and culture.

This resulted in a stereotypical characterisation of migrants, where Jack Lawson was the only character who exemplified the mixing of cultures – all other migrants were presented as individuals who valued retaining their own culture and did not mention positive or negative exchange and interaction with others. Further, the display did not historicise 'shared character traits' that make up collective identities (Whitehead et al, 2015, p. 9), but essentialised these differences and homogenised these 'groups' (Waterton and Smith, 2010; Naidoo, 2005; Littler, 2008). Whitehead *et al.* have analysed museums' attempts at representing an identity *for* others, often informed by cultural prejudice, as potentially resulting in 'representational violence' (Whitehead *et al.*, 2015, p. 10) – an outside representation that potentially did not correspond to self-images. While participatory practice has been proposed as a method to empower those previously excluded, whose voices have not been heard (Fouseki, 2010; Witcomb, 2003) a curator's voice in Destination Tyneside spoke for historical migrants, potentially adding 'another layer of oppression' (Museum 3, 2016). Actual migrants' voices were not heard, in this account they only claimed to speak from migrants' experiences. This giving of voice, rather than empowering migrants and those whose voices have not been heard, silenced them further.

The figures' narratives claimed authority, as 'real' historical people seemed to be speaking in the exhibition. The process of creating these narratives and the sources they were built on were not discussed in the exhibition. This contrasts the representation of these video figures with the representational method employed by the *Sit With Me* installation, that strongly highlighted the nature of the historic evidence and its gaps. The presentation of these video figures in the museum – an authoritative institution of knowledge-making – bestowed on the constructed narrative accounts the status of historical knowledge (Gouriévidis, 2014, p. 13; Tozzi, 2012).

There were also limitations to the oral histories of contemporary migrants. While these migrants spoke directly, there were also degrees of mediation in the giving of voice. Firstly, they were chosen as representing the biggest groups of post-war migrants, so this

selection criteria partly determined who was allowed to speak. Reflecting the same problem as with the historic characters, the representative role the individuals were assigned, potentially impacted on their oral histories, similar to Cosson's observation that oral history researchers often approach marginalised groups with certain expectations, or an agenda (2010). Further, the interviews were conducted in the specific context of creating an exhibition in a public museum, very likely impacting on how the interviewees presented themselves. The interviewees' portrayals of largely positive stories reflected Ashley's findings of the way minority groups' display their heritage to wider society (2014).

There was also a clearly discernible hierarchy between the historical display in the first part of the exhibit with the traditional collection display as well as the video figures based on these collections, and the contemporary section of the display, which drew on oral histories with present-day migrants. The contemporary videos were shown on small screens as part of the display walls, and the sound was scrambled and much lower than the historical characters video figures. The lack of prominence of the contemporary migrants' stories appeared to indicate that the museum's management and curation team did not see them as central for this exhibition. This reinforced the marginal character of public participation and engagement within the museum infrastructure (Lynch, 2011)

The content analysis showed how sources were employed to present knowledge about the past in the museum space. The filling of gaps between sources and presentations in the video figures and other elements, such as *Sit With Me* and oral histories gave voice to the surviving documents and to migrants themselves, enabling the telling of both more incomplete but also deeper stories of adaptation and societal exchange. Limitations were also discussed, in the conflation of individual and collective identities, with identities being asserted *for* people in the past.

#### **4.5. Positioning knowledge about the past as public**

The stories told in the exhibition made diverse claims about the publicness of the stories told, showing how the museum perspective asserted the public value of knowledge about the past.

For Destination Tyneside, the integration of diverse actors' histories into regional representations was intended to impact upon personal feelings of belonging. This used the public platform of the regional museum to challenge notions of belonging and assert the place of migrants in the story of Tyneside. TWAM used the Destination Tyneside display to give visibility to migrants' experiences in public, using its authority as a regional public institution to legitimise migration history as a constitutive part of the region (Gouriévidis 2014, p. 13). The reshaping of historical narratives was intended to impact

the shaping of new identities (Hintermann and Johansson, 2010, p.7). The display aimed to reconfigure individuals' understanding of 'culture' in several ways, redefining the boundaries of the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1980), or who is part of 'The Heritage' (Hall, 2005). This clearly recognised issues of identity and belonging as public issues (Sandell, 1998; Smith, Fouseki, 2011). Further, the characters' stories were of public interest and importance, because they evidenced larger trends and were statistically representative (Little, 2013). On the other hand, while the personal narratives were linked to public and wider communal and social experiences, the cultural and personal experiences highlighted were in many ways *not* displayed or portrayed as public.

Parts of the display declared that all of society was affected by stories of migration, though in a personalised way. The world map very explicitly linked migration to everyone in Tyneside, aiming to make visitors reconsider their own personal connection to this history (Little, 2013). This told viewers that migration was part of a shared past. The world map stated to visitors that migration likely was also part of their family heritage, if they went back up to three generations. This aimed to create a shared history through identification and personal continuity, rather than stating this as a shared *issue*. It challenged the visitor to think about their *own* family history, and to consider if this past was constitutive of their own identity, even if they had considered migration, and the display up to that point, as *someone else's* story. The interpretive strategy was to integrate a migration past into the life narrative and self-understanding of Tynesiders, aiming to destabilise visitors' sense of distance from migrants to consider them as part of their 'reference group' (Collin et al, 2016, p. 171). It reflected Tony Kushner's cursory statement about the *perception* of migration as about someone else. He mentions those who are not part of the 'high percentage of the British population, perhaps as much as 20 per cent who are of first, second or third generation immigrant background': those 'whose immigrant origins are more distant (or, perhaps more relevantly, believe their immigrant origins to be more distant, or indeed to be non-existent)' (Kushner, 2001, p. 82). This strategy implied that those who were part of the region were *personally affected* by the outlined history of migration. While this was aimed to reconfigure personal understandings of affectedness, it did not make wider claims about this being a shared or public issue. If a visitor was certain they did not have any migrating ancestors themselves, they could deny that this history had any importance for them.

The focus on personal choices and private cultural expressions isolated the stories from larger societal developments and did not make claims about their cultural identities and expressions being of wider or public concern. The focus of the historic characters' narratives on the aspects that made them 'different' separated them from mainstream society. A description saying, 'Irish catholic migrants preferred Irish priests who they felt could understand them better than an English priest.' gave an insight into migrants'

experiences, but did not clarify how these personal sensibilities were relevant to wider society. The integrative role of many community organisations was disregarded in this inward-looking portrayal (Burnett, 2007; Bueltmann, 2014). The historic narratives mainly portrayed the migrants' stories in isolation from the 'hosts', without focusing on integration in any major way. The video figures strengthened ideas of distinct and stable cultures, in a mix of what Ashworth *et al* have called 'salad bowl' and 'add-on' models of heritage representations in plural societies (Ashworth *et al.*, 2007) where heritages are represented as isolated, without impacting on each other. Differences, contestation and negotiation were not discussed and issues of social stratification (Fraser, 2005), the role of difference in creating societal hierarchies (Scott, 1995; Naidoo and Littler, 2005; Hesse, 2000; Hall, 2000) were sidestepped. The video figures depicted a multicultural mosaic, where communities lived parallel to one another. Thus, even though the personal stories were in a public space, only parts of them made *claims* to be as 'of common concern' (Fraser, 1992).

The individualised depiction of the display and the categorising of the historic migrants as 'worthy' also depoliticised processes of migration, and did not make claims for these being issues of wider concern. It shifted responsibility for success on migrants themselves. Work was cast in the videos as the means for the migrants to have a good life (Thomas mentioned 'work and prospects', while Angela hoped that in Newcastle 'hard work can have its rewards') and the lack of work often the reason stated for leaving their home country. All historical migrants and their families were presented as hard-working, with 'work' being the one word mentioned most often by the video characters. Angela Marcantonio described her hard work making ice cream, followed by the success of their shop. Ann Montgomery too mentioned her husband's hard work as crucial for his success.

Through his efforts, my husband John has risen as a foreman at the copper works. We've achieved much by following solid conservative principles on these shores.

Their dedication clearly marked them as good migrants, while it precluded more difficult discussions about migrants who may not have been so successful. In *Sit With Me*, on the other hand, one man is described as 'guilty of stealing food, Ireland, family man', while two others are described as of 'no occupation'. This eschewed a characterisation of migrants as either good or bad, and nevertheless described their status as Tynesiders. They were thus part of wider society regardless of their employment status. In the main display, however, the portrayal of individual successful migrants who worked hard, made their success their own responsibility, rather than conveying any sense of responsibility on political or wider societal actors. While the descriptions in his glass case mentioned tough work regulations Ali Said contested and his participation in the Seamen's Minority Movement, he did not mention these in his video narrative. The focus on the personal in discussing migrants' successes implied that each person has the same amount of control



over their life course, neglecting the way social position impacts on the power people have over their lives (Phillips, 1991). Following the tendency of immigration narratives 'as an individual success story' (Baur, 2006, p.132; see also Trofanenko, 2016), this largely privatised migrants' experiences.

The contemporary oral histories on the other hand discussed issues of community engagement and volunteering in relation to wider society, marking those as public issues and experiences. The oral histories also discussed the migrants' community work and ideas about 'giving back' to society. Ifan explained that his father felt like this as he had his friends and family in Newcastle, he was involved with the mosque, had his business and was known in the community. Bahal too was active in the community and received an MBE for his activism. As well as community work, Gugu and James both discussed their wishes to 'give back' to society 'for the kindness I have received' and they both volunteered in their free time. James Wu distinguished the contemporary Chinese community in Newcastle from the 1950s and 60s, stating that 'Modern Chinese, I believe, are not so inward thinking. They intend to integrate into Tyneside culture, rather than standing apart.' He also explained, why he called Newcastle his hometown: 'Not only because it was where my journey started more than ten years ago, but also because its diversity, its openness, fairness and tolerance, represent a society I want to be part of.' The *Sit with Me* installation also presented the idea of a shared history. It attempted this through the use of empathy and a sense of shared humanity, for example through the statement 'They are migrants – they were Tynesiders'. The plaque next to the installation read: 'Their thoughts, their labour, their relationships and their families have shaped Tyneside. Tyneside shaped their lives.' This formulates an interactive relationship between Tyneside and the migrants, with both impacting on each other. *Sit with Me* explicitly stated that Tyneside was transformed by migration, indicating migrants as mixing and impacting on the region as a whole.

Conflicted views on the public value of historical knowledge were also discernible in the curator's statements. She articulated her hope that the museum was important for everybody in the city, and would have personal relevance to them:

I would like to think that everybody could find something (...) that resonates with them from history or heritage. And I suppose that's our job, ... to understand what matters to people, and ... facilitate access to the history and heritage that we are holding in collections, or within our galleries. ... I think it's just about finding right way in for people, and often people start with their own life and branch out. (Museum 1, 2016).

This conceived of people as interested in their own lives, seeing museums' role as widening these interests – to more public issues that go beyond their personal experiences and views (Tosh, 2014). The curator suggested that it was sometimes a challenge to 'find the right way in for people' and that you have to 'start with what matters to them'. She reflected on this further when discussing the museum's commitment to

'Spark conversation about Tyneside's changing story to promote a sense of place and shared humanity,' and be a space to discuss current and controversial issues, such as migration. She however discussed this vision to promote an 'idea of shared humanity' as difficult:

I think, with Discovery, we have to find a balance, because we've got a family audience, but we're also committed to this social justice programme, ... But we've got to balance that with being a space that families want to come in with their kids, and do more popular things. So, within the programming of the space, it's always kind of trying to find a balance between doing popular things and doing things, I guess which might be seen as more worthy. (Museum 1, 2016)

Her statement implied a gap between the convictions of the museum – what it finds worthy – and what visitors, and specifically a family audience, expect. At the same time, the way the curator considers the museums' interests as *opposed*, or at least not aligned, to visitors' interests, constructs an idea of what visitors want – in this case things that are not considered too 'worthy'. This idea of balancing between the museum's commitment to social justice and personal interests of visitors did not discuss the issues about 'branching out', which she stated above, that were more connected to ideas of starting from personal interest to then connect those to issues of public relevance. Rather, her second statement privatised audiences as consumers, whose particular personal preferences – of having a fun family day out – were difficult to align with public concerns about social justice. The notion of museums as driven by visitors' interests (Liddiard, 2004, p. 18) has been argued to show the shift from 'public spectator to private consumer' (McPherson, 2006, p. 52). She implied two views of the role of knowledge about the past in public, one in entertaining a private consumer audience, the other in contributing to public conversations between citizens. Her views of audiences thus shifted between what Liddington called 'just privatized history-consumer' and 'real participators', who actively and critically debate (Liddington, 2002, p. 90).

This idea of private tastes was further relevant for how the museum thought of audiences for Destination Tyneside. The fact that the exhibition was created in response to the low number of BME visitors and their lack of identification with the Museum displays, suggested that the history of migration was considered relevant to those (potential) BME visitors. This was a strategy to make the museum displays more inclusive, to impact on ethnic minorities and give them a sense of belonging through the representation of migration stories in a public platform. Museums' endeavours to target new audiences, especially ethnic minority groups, have resulted in diverse schemes to represent 'their' history (de Wildt, 2015; Little and Watson, 2015; Ang, 2009). The creation of the Destination Tyneside gallery as directly targeting BME visitors however also *confined* this history as specifically relevant to the target group. As Ang highlighted, this targeting particularises minority interests, while implying that the majority of displayed history was

not for them (2019). Migration was not mentioned in the rest of the Discovery Museum. One interviewee voiced the hope that at the next renovation of the whole gallery, migrant history would be dispersed in the displays, rather than displayed separately (Museum 2, 2016). Migration was not, for example, mentioned in the Story of the Tyne exhibit on another floor of the museum. In this way, a distinction was created between particular interest and universal interest (de Wildt, 2015, p. 230). This implied a view of segregated histories and followed the tendency of other immigration exhibitions to portray communities and their contribution to the area as separate from the 'mainstream' (de Wildt, 2015; Ross, 2015). It left the display open to charges of marginalising migration history (Ang, 2014, p. 209, Van Geert, 2014), with the worry that it was not seen to be of 'general national significance' (Ang, 2009, p. 21). Regional historical experiences in this conceptualisation were depicted as unaffected by migration. This also implied a very segregated and fragmented perception of the public, where interests were not shared and common. However, while this sequencing suggests that the intended audiences were BME people, the professed aims of the exhibition – 'To promote tolerance, alter perceptions on immigration and contribute to social cohesion by increasing understanding of the migrant experience.' – implied imaginary white visitors, conceptualised of as with no family experience of migration and hostile to migrants, as the intended audience.

While the display and its location in a public institution included several public elements, such as the public recognition of migrants' experiences as of relevance for the Tyneside story, several depictions had privatised elements. This was for example the case in privatised depictions of work and culture. The curator further shed light on the challenging role of the museum in attempting to provide space for debating public issues, while also conceptualising audiences as private consumers, thus calling into question the publicness of the knowledge produced.

#### **4.6. Effects of the exhibition on the present**

Analysis of the effects of the exhibition gave an indication of the role of the museum perspective on knowledge-making in challenging or perpetuating societal inequalities. Affective, cultural, social and political effects of the display explored in this section were in various ways implicated in both the maintenance of present hierarchies as well as, in some ways, their contestation. The effects evaluated below were based on the aims and effects of the exhibition text and process of making this text, rather than on audience research, which would have gone beyond the scope of this thesis.

The mission statement about the value of knowledge about migration to add an 'informed perspective' was followed by the aim to 'promote tolerance, alter perceptions on immigration and contribute to social cohesion' (Little, 2013, p. 2). While the first sentence

implied that information was neutral and detached in the historical tradition, the second showed that this information was *nevertheless* about values. The informed historical perspective was thus not merely about accuracy and facts – about displaying knowledge about what happened in the past – but was strongly infused with its instrumental value in changing attitudes to migration and to ‘contribute to social cohesion’. This commitment was not acknowledged in the presentation of the display, but nevertheless central to the museum’s knowledge-making. The history produced and presented was here intended to have effects on the present.

The display used a mix of emotional and intellectual strategies to facilitate understanding of migration, to create affective responses from visitors and to contribute to social cohesion. The physical presence of the video figures brought migrants’ humanness *near* (Phillips, 2008, p. 55), visitors were asked to emphasise with them as they disclosed stories of their lives. The first-person approach and the openness with which the historical characters discussed their feelings, was intended to enable an ‘immediate and emotional connection’ between visitor and historical character (Little, 2013, p. 3). Visitors found themselves eye to eye with migrants from the past, the life-size video figures inhabit the same space as the present-day visitor. Physical and emotional distance was collapsed, as their figures were placed *with* the visitor. *Sit with Me* too, aimed at having an affective impact. The academic who curated this installation stated ‘[b]y inviting people to sit down and look at themselves and others through a mirror, it’s a contemplative experience and provides a timely opportunity for them to reflect on their own opinions about historic – and contemporary – migration. I hope people will be intrigued and surprised by what they see.’ (Newcastle University Press Office, April 2016). The museum curator said about the display that ‘There is a real opportunity to connect with people from the past on a human level.’ (Newcastle University Press Office, April 2016). The screen, on which the visitor could see documents and photos of migrants, was also a mirror, and the portraits ended up merging with the visitor’s face. As the curator stated, this was about reflecting on shared humanity (Newcastle University Press Office, April 2016). The figures and the closeness with which visitors encounter migrants’ *experiences*, was hoped to make them feel more positive about contemporary migration, and thus improve life together for everyone in Tyneside (Little, 2013, p. 2).

The gallery’s aim to foster a sense of pride in the region at the same time neglected reflection on issues of continuing inequality and racism in the present. The display offered a largely positive account of experiences of migration, where difficulties were overcome – apart from Ali Said’s deportation – and the personal stories were optimistic. Lena’s narrative, for example, of fleeing persecution to then arrive safely in Newcastle, where she built a happy life, contributed to this. The fact that she and her husband had hoped to travel to America added to the dramatic story, but did not take away from its positive

effect. Two statements of families' continuity in the area also contributed to this positivity. The text after Thomas Murphy's video display says 'Thomas Murphy's great-granddaughter lives in Hebburn not far from Jarrow. 2013,' showing his family's legacy. The text after Angela Marcantonio's video told us that her great-grandchildren were still leading the successful business. Even the difficult conditions in a chemical factory were framed positively. The character Thomas Murphy wore a handkerchief around the lower half of his face and was coughing, but stated: 'It's better than having no work at all' and affirming his gratitude for the stable job.

Several elements were deployed to reinforce an affirmation about the open character of the region, also contributing to this positive portrayal. The display's narrative emphasised the idea of Tyneside's regional character as welcoming. The curator's and management team's aim for the exhibition stated the desire to show how the North East could 'benefit from migration' and to 'show ... we have always been an open society' (Little, 2013, p. 2). The openness statement was contained in the exhibit's assertions that 'Tyneside was more tolerant than other areas in Britain, where Irish Catholic migrants faced hostility' and 'Rapid industrial expansion on Tyneside, in industries such as the chemical and iron works, meant that there was less friction between the Irish and local workforce here than in other areas in Britain'. The description in Ann's case said that even though associated with anti-Catholicism, 'Orangeism in the North East posed less of a threat to community relations, and lodges in Hebburn and Jarrow 'were not militant and often opposed marches.'

Racism was mentioned, in the telling of Ali Said's story. Ali described his experiences in the following manner:

With 3000 Yemeni people now living in South Shields, we have big trouble being accepted by the locals. They say we are stealing their jobs if we work or are lazy if we don't. We can never win. There is now a campaign to make us leave. Even attacks on our people and our property. There is trouble coming, I can tell. Men of the Yemen, for whom some have such contempt, I would point out, are all British subjects. Some also forget that during the Great War, many Yemeni men worked on British ships. I think about 700 Yemeni men from South Shields died fighting for this country. I cannot be quiet. I will speak out for the Yemeni people of South Shields. That's why I always include my name and address in letters to the gazette. People should tell our side of the story too. I simply wish to be known as a loyal British man.

While the text seemed agitated, his manner was not, the account was told softly and amiably. The documents and descriptions in the glass case and the text after his narrative account mentioned his deportation, but Said's narrative ends on a polite note: 'Ah, where are my manners – would you like some tea or something to eat?'. The contemporary oral histories gave some insights into experiences of racism, while also framing these as only isolated cases. Bahal and Gugu both mentioned that when they arrived, there were 'not many BMEs' around. Gugu stated that she experienced racism, young people spat at her

and there were times she was worried when she left the house. She stated that this had improved and says 'I put it down to lack of knowledge, and the fact that there were not so many BMEs, especially Africans. Negative media reports don't help.' Shirin Hussein explained the effect the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 had on her personal experiences of hostility in the city and impacted on the way she clothed. James Wu on the other hand experienced Newcastle as a very friendly and open place.

The curator mentioned that in the process of creating the exhibition, there were discussions about including oppositional voices to immigration, but this was deemed not to fit with what the exhibition was trying to achieve. The display portrayed an uplifting story, which sought to leave visitors feeling positive about the area, as well as about past and present migration to it. Racism and 'race' were discussed as issues only marginally connected to the story of migration to Tyneside. The message of the display that 'Tyneside always was an open society' came close to eradicating it from public memory by asserting this as historical knowledge in the museum. This is particularly problematic considering the reality of racism, prejudice and exclusion in the present (Whitehead *et al*, 2015, p. 32). This mirrors tendencies of general multicultural policy in the UK (Panayi, 2010; Littler, 2008) as well as international migration displays that present celebratory accounts. Researchers have, for example, highlighted cases in Australia, Catalonia and Canada that follow the same model (Ang, 2009; Van Geert, 2014; Trofanenko, 2016), and so the case of Destination Tyneside falls into a wider pattern of international museological practice. The effect of this positive representation of racism as not a problem for the present was a disregard for present racism, discrimination and inequality in society (Littler, 2008).

This unreflective representation of racism and the positive framing of the whole display had effects on the analysis and understanding of present racism in society. Ali's polite manner implied that he was speaking to someone who he did not hold accountable for the racism he experienced and would not expect to behave in a racist way. This allows the visitor to comfortably distance themselves from these racist actions, and feel confident that these were about *someone else*, rather than part of our society, with racial hierarchies also affecting the visitor. 'Race' was however not mentioned as a factor. A statement at the end of Lena's narrative about: "The 1905 Aliens Act attempted to restrict migration to Britain in response to the large number of Eastern European Jewish people moving here." was left uncommented and unexplained, as was the fact that Ali was deported after 25 years. *Sit With Me* on the other hand explicitly showed the integration and dis-integration of residents through international contexts and policy decisions, with one of the descriptions saying, 'enemy alien by marriage'. This allows an understanding of racism and xenophobia as contingent on societal and political contexts (Tabili, 2011; Johnson, 2012). Whitehead *et al*. have argued that museums displays can add an historical view to

present debates and issues, for example by showing that life together is hardly ever harmonious (Whitehead *et al.*, 2015). However, in Destination Tyneside, present debates were eschewed and left the visitor with the impression that there was no real need for society to change. Structural explanations, racism and inequality, in short political issues of migration and difference, were side-lined. Even though the curators explicitly highlighted migration as a political issue (Littler, 2013), it was largely depoliticised by the portrayal of harmonious multicultural diversity (Ang, 2009).

The position of the museum itself in an unequal society was not discussed in this perspective. The main decisions in the creation of the exhibition, and centrally, the decision to use personal narratives to engage visitors, were taken by the management team and staff, with the wider public remaining a passive audience in this process. This was also due to funding and time limitations, with the curator explaining that the team struggled to embed public participation in the exhibition making process (Museum 1, 2016). The curator cited time pressure for the decision to foreground individual consultations with academics, city council officers, migrants' descendants and migrants themselves, over a steering committee or wider group consultations. The funding model meant that engagement remained at the margins of the creation process (Lynch, 2013). Wider museum staffing hierarchies remained intact during the creation of the exhibition (Kinsley, 2016), with 2% of Tyne and Wear Archives and Museum's staff BME (Arts Council England, 2019, p. 31). One of the outreach staff explained that she considered herself to be the 'black face of the organisation' – and felt isolated in the organisation in working with and representing work with 'black communities'. While she affirmed that 'everyone has the right to tell their history', she also pointed out the 'structures that exist, which limit us to get to kind of like, deeper stories, let's say.' These structures were specifically connected to questions about who decided (Museum 3, 2016).

While the display thus aimed to have positive effects on the region and contribute to toleration and social cohesion, its celebratory depiction of the region resulted in an unreflective depiction of racism. This eschewed a deeper analysis of racism, while the processes of making knowledge about the past in the museum left intact the existing hierarchies in the museum.

## Summary

This chapter explored the representation of migration and minority history at the Discovery Museum in Newcastle, investigating the narratives told in Destination Tyneside and the public image it depicted of the contemporary area. The museum workers' motivations were primarily concerned with the present and the museum as a place for people's stories. The making of the exhibition discussed the methods employed to make and

represent knowledge about the past, as well as the limitation of approaches that aimed to give voice to past migrants. The investigation of the positioning of museum knowledge in public discussed how the exhibition content did, in parts, make claims about the public relevance of issues of identity and belonging, while in other parts emphasising personal experiences without claims about their public relevance beyond their visibility in a public place. This neglect is particularly important as the museum is a central organisation facilitating and contributing to societal understanding about 'public' issues. The failure to meaningfully integrate an understanding of the public significance of cultural identity, belonging and difference has a profound impact on societal relations, as will be explored further in the two following chapters. The last section finally argued that while the display aimed to create emotional belonging, it at the same time evaded more difficult issues racism and inequality, while itself based on an unequal museum and funding infrastructure. While the museum was conceived as a place for 'social justice' and as such, aimed to have effects, this aim was at the same time de-politicised. The intervention made through the signification of migrants from the past as *important* and the clear statement that they were part of the region was also isolated by a mis-recognition of the structural context of both the events in the past, as well as the role of the museum within present structures. In line with wide-spread celebratory accounts of migration in the international museum landscape, the non-structural and de-politicised approach disconnected past migration from present regional problems. This poses a problem for public (historical) understanding of the past, the present and their connection.



## 5. BOTTOM-UP PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S MIGRATION TO THE NORTH EAST

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on bottom-up processes of knowledge-making. It analyses the participant-led heritage project BAM! Sistahood!, which researched and documented Black and minority women's<sup>6</sup> past and present experiences of migration to the North East of England. The first section provides the context of bottom-up approaches to history and heritage and the black-led women's centre that coordinated the BAM! project. The chapter then analyses the BAM! Sistahood! project's motivations. The next part describes the main features of the case study, providing an overview of its main elements. The chapter then analyses how the project participants produced knowledge about the past, followed by an examination of how this knowledge was positioned as 'public', as well as how public space was accessed. It concludes by investigating the wider effects on the present of these engagements with the past.

While many of the documents and interviews analysed here used the terms of history and heritage almost interchangeably, I use the term 'history' as describing the knowledge created about the past, and 'heritage' as a valorisation of aspects of the past.

For this research, I took part as a volunteer, and later oral history researcher and filmmaker, in the BAM! Sistahood! project. My main role as volunteer was the facilitation of research workshops at The Angelou Centre – the home of the BAM! Sistahood project. I also participated in project activities, museum visits, workshops, interviewing and filming. I thus had a dual role of facilitator and researcher. I collected and analysed some of the materials – exhibitions, a digital archive including films, photographs and texts – produced as part of the project, as well as taking notes after my participation in any activities. During the fieldwork, my role was transparent; I was open about my position as a researcher.

The research also involved interviews with project co-ordinators and volunteers and focus groups with participants to investigate how they conceived of their role within the wider framework of history- and heritage-making. I interviewed two members of staff at the Angelou Centre, who were involved in the project. I also interviewed three volunteers and participants of the project. My observations while attending and participating in the project

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<sup>6</sup> In The Angelou Centre's own documentation and statements, the terms 'Black' and 'Black and minority women' were used as terms encompassing those affected by discrimination on the basis of gender and 'race'.

informed the interviews and their interpretation. Interviewees were recruited at events and training workshops. The criteria for inclusion, in line with the heritage project, were that they were Black and minority women living in North East England and taking part in the BAM! Sistahood! project. The semi-structured interviews asked about their involvement in the project, why the past was important to them, and their views on official representations of the regional past. I also undertook two focus group interviews with women taking part in the project. Participants were recruited through and organised by email, with the help of staff at the Centre. Initially, my plan was to interview the women involved in the research group. This was because the women in the research group were involved in undertaking and steering research into the history of BAMER women in the North East. It later emerged, however, that the steering of research was an informal rather than a formal process and involved different women undertaking the tasks at different times, and so it did not constitute a coherent interviewable group. The focus group interview thus involved those women who were most involved in the project and did most of the work related to research and curation. The focus groups used photographs and images as visual stimulants to discuss broader themes of history and heritage.

### **5.1. Context: Resistant self-representation**

Societies' understanding of the past should be considered in relation to Authorised Heritage Discourses. These are discourses which often foster imperial, patriarchal and elite valorisations of the past's remains (Smith, 2006; 2008). Moreover, museums' development as colonial institutions (Lidchi, 1997), as well as heritage and history writing as endeavors of nation-building (Smith, 2006; Tozzi, 2018) are also part of this discourse. Present institutions are the enactors of these hierarchies, namely national museums and national and international heritage listing and funding bodies (Naidoo, 2016; Lynch, 2013; Littler, 2005). In this heritage hierarchy, the 'control of resources and narratives' remains with museum professionals (Watson and Waterton, 2010), who decide whose history and heritage matters. The Authorised Heritage Discourse, then, has the potential to exclude alternative forms of valorisation of the past (Smith, 2006; 2013).

Scholars have increasingly turned to 'communities' as actors in these alternative ways of making meaning about the past. Scholars of various disciplines have researched these bottom up and 'ordinary people's' relations with the past (Macdonald, 2013; Kean, Ashton, 2009; Dresser, 2010), following in the tradition of Raphael Samuel's notion of the 'sense of the past, at any given point in time' as an intrinsic part of history (1994, p. 15). Some heritage scholars link communities directly to authentic relations to the past, with more community representation assumed as a method to increase authentic heritage value (Deacon and Smeets, 2013; Gentry, 2013; Chan, 2017).

Some funders, too, like the UK National Heritage Lottery Fund, as well as international listing bodies such as UNESCO, now consider 'communities' as important actors in attributing value and cultural significance. Communities are treated by these bodies as the holders of intangible cultural heritage traditions (Gentry, 2013; Deacon and Smeets, 2013; Kurin, 2004). The UK Heritage Fund emphasises *local* cultural practices as heritage worth preserving (Gentry, 2013). It has however been argued that in the UK, expert knowledge and tangible remains are still prioritised over bottom-up approaches (Smith and Waterton, 2009).

Others have cautioned against claims to authenticity within community-based heritage (Crooke, 2010; Waterton and Smith, 2010), as well as assumptions about the homogeneous character of communities (Smith, 2010; Naidoo, 2005; Littler, 2008; Crooke, 2010). The celebratory nature of this heritage-making which might embed inequitable traditions in a framework that sees 'culture as generally hopeful and positive' is also criticised (Kurin, 2004, p. 70). While these approaches explore the meaning and value of bottom-up perspectives, a few publicly-focused historians have investigated non-academic approaches to *knowledge*-making about the past, calling attention to the 'ethnographic expertise of minority activists' (Dresser, 2010, p. 61), as well as to the ways non-academics can contribute to knowledge about national identities (Pente *et al* , 2015).

A main focus of existing bottom-up perspectives is with the self-representation of history and heritage. In postcolonial contexts, some 'community museums' make efforts to link self-representation with decolonisation, where groups are in full control to 'portray the identities that they wish to display to the world' (Hoobler, 2006, p. 451). The self-definition of identities is in this way linked to resistance against oppression (Collins, 1991, p. 16). An excellent example of this is the community archives movement in the UK that collect and represent the experiences of people of African, Asian and Caribbean descent (Flinn and Stevens, 2009). The London based George Padmore Library provides an archive and educational resources about political organisations and campaigns, and the Institute of Race Relations' library (now based in the University of Warwick) also holds resources on racism and resistance in the UK. The Institute for Race Relations also holds an archive and the Black History Collection London archive affiliated with it holds collections about Black community and grassroots groups and the anti-racist struggle. The Black Cultural Archives in Brixton also collects material on Black history and culture (Flinn and Stevens, 2009). The Everyday Muslim project records the diverse experiences of British Muslims in UK society digitally, as well as physically in archives across the UK (Everyday Muslim, 2019). Further research is needed into the status of the knowledge bottom-up perspectives on the past produce, how claims to authenticity can be adjudicated, and relatedly how they go beyond establishing claims concerning personal and community value, but make wider claims about public value (Ashley, 2016).

The BAM! Sistahood! project is analysed below in a tradition of resistant self-representation by Black and minority groups in the UK. The central organising body of the heritage project was the Angelou Centre, a black-led women's centre that was established in 1994 in the West End of Newcastle. It provides holistic support to Black and minority ethnic women, career and skills development, including job application and interview sessions, counselling and legal advice and advocacy for survivors of domestic violence and abuse, and social and creative activities (The Angelou Centre, 2015). The centre is a women-only space that provides intensive assistance to women with complex needs. This includes the provision of childcare, learning opportunities, linguistic expertise, one-to-one mentoring, volunteering opportunities, a budget for travel, and access to digital equipment within a 'familiar, trusted and welcoming environment where their cultural and social needs are met' (BAM! Sistahood!, 2015, p. 3). This Centre provides the context within which the bottom-up heritage project BAM! Sistahood! can be understood.

## **5.2. Project motivations**

Motivations of the bottom-up perspective shed light on the way women planning and participating in the project conceived of the importance of the past. Interviews revealed the specific societal circumstances that shaped interest in the past, as well as their aims for the BAM! project.

Bottom-up initiatives, in heritage as well as more widely, often emerge out of an acknowledgement of existing barriers in public and wider societal institutions. Development and self-organisation, such as BME (Black and minority ethnic) organisations in the UK, are a means to combat exclusion from public services, and administer to specific unmet needs (Flinn and Stevens, 2009; Mayblin, 2017). Community development, then, is a strategy to remove barriers that stop people from 'participating in the issues that affect their lives' and take control of these issues (Standing Conference for Community Development, 2001, quoted in Gilchrist, 2003, p. 22). The Angelou Centre, in this context, aims to enable Black and minority women to achieve social and economic independence (The Angelou Centre, 2015), responding to the fact that public institutions lack language and cultural expertise to provide services to these sections of the society.

The BAM! Sistahood! project was developed with participants in the context of The Angelou Centre's goals to support women facing various levels of exclusion to move towards independence. Cultural and social activities were part of a holistic strategy the Angelou Centre adopted, and similarly affected by issues of access. An analysis of documentary material, as well as interviews with project coordinators and participants gave insights into their motivations. The statements voiced most frequently were about the importance of the past as a constitutive element of people's lives and experiences in the

present. Participants and Angelou-based coordinators discussed the past as continuous with the present, often linked with 'identity'. The project leader commented on the lack of historical awareness for mixed heritage individuals and communities, stating that 'often it's hard to have that rooted sense of the self' (BAM 1, 2016). Others expressed similar motivations for undertaking this project:

So I suppose it's understanding my own history and finding my own identity, and knowing who I am, and ... I think learning about the people who influence the kind of person I am. (BAM 3, 2016)

[M]ost importantly, all of us, for myself, being able to find my own identity and realising where the power lies – and the power lies within us, as women, to stand together, stay united and work together. (BAM 5, 2016)

These statements expressed the importance of knowledge about their *personal* past and show the role of the past in their identity negotiations (McLean, 2006; Macdonald, 2013; Robertson, 2008). While the past was important for interviewees' own identities, relations with the past were not understood as purely individualist. The project motivations and those of most of its participants revealed highly collectivist beliefs. The collective was often extended to *women* in general. One participant voiced the idea of pride in women's achievements

When I see this one (Earl Grey Monument, Newcastle City Centre), I thought, "Where is the woman?" If it was a woman like that, we would be proud. One day women are also going to be there. (Focus group 2, 2016)

One comment also mentioned the importance of the past as discontinuous with the present, which echoes some of the statements made by the academic historians.

It's not always about inventing something new. ... - it's almost like a big database of how human beings have solved problems. (BAM 2, 2016)

But none of the other BAM interviewees stated this idea about the past as a separate instrument to solve problems of the present or increase understanding through something disconnected from the present. This interviewee was also interested in the intellectual impact the past had on the present, describing a research project she read about where a group of participants were asked to think about their ancestors before taking a test and those who did performed better in the test.

So they thought about their family, their parents, their parents' parents, their parents' parents' parents, and I don't know whether that gave them a bit more like determination, or whether there was any other aspects, ... it did have an impact. (BAM 2, 2016)

She liked the idea that the impact came from a relation to one's ancestors. This personal need for the past, a relation to one's own history, ancestors, and women of the past to draw on for personal strength, was a central aspect for all interviewees. In most interviews, the personal connection to the past was considered especially important as inspiring action. The project leader drew on Black thinkers Ida B. Wells and Sojourner

Truth to state, 'How do you approach the future if you don't understand the past.' She asserted that knowledge of past activism was 'powerful', stressing the importance of generations of Black women's activism, and 'how that inspires people to being able to keep continuing this tradition of resistance and activism.' (BAM 1, 2016) Many participants similarly discussed the past as inspirational.

It helps us to live life now. Some things inspire us, some things we don't like, and would not like to be. (BAM 4, 2016)

So it's really really touching and I was inspired. (Focus group 1, 2016)

These statements expressed a connection to the past as essential and fundamental for the present and conceived of the role of the past as enabling actors to make change. Crucially, this was not just about the present, but also the future. While researchers have highlighted the importance of a connection with the past for a sense of self, and of well-being (Caswell *et al*, 2017; Twells *et al*, 2018), the motivations here also included a *future* dimension and stressed 'power' and action.

The second key aspect of the participants' and facilitators' motivations was a response to a social context which excluded Black women in public and academic representations of the past. When introducing the project to new participant women, the facilitator usually explained the rationale for the project, saying that, 'When we go to museums in the area, we don't see women like us represented, and we want to change that.' The coordinator explained that an essential need for a connection with the past was very consciously felt by marginalised individuals and groups, stating, 'If you've had your history wiped out, you understand it's important; no, it's absolutely crucial.' (BAM 1, 2016). Self-representation was also seen as a way of rectifying stereotypical representations of Black and minority women in wider society (BAM! Sistahood!, 2015, p. 1). This justified the project in response to the public image of the history of the North East, either a complete lack of awareness of Black and minority women's relevance within the region, or biased representations.

The direct impact of societal misrepresentation on women's experiences contributed to their motivations. One volunteer stated the importance of a connection to the past in terms of her children growing up as part of a minority within society.

I never thought my children would ask me so many questions, what is heritage, what is our heritage? That reminded me who I am. (Focus group 1, 2016)

Because their skin colour is different, they are asked – okay, they are British, but why is their skin like that? (Focus group 1, 2016)

The project plan identified the importance of knowledge about Black and minority women's heritage and history not just for the women themselves, but for the region as a whole, stating the importance of Black and minority women for 'the fabric of North Eastern

culture and activism' (BAM! Sistahood!, 2015, p. 4). This societal context at the same time linked misrepresentation and misunderstanding to an idea of valorisation. The project plan described Black and minority women as 'undervalued as ... heritage interpreters and participants' (BAM! Sistahood!, 2015, p. 26), emphasising the need to support women 'to value their own part in regional heritage making' (ibid., p.27).

These motivations expressed a connection to the past as fundamental and non-negotiable. In addition to its importance for personal identity, knowledge of Black and minority women's past was expressed as essential for the whole society. Especially the coordinators considered the BAM! project and Black and minority women's heritage as about and for everyone, rather than separate from wider society and solely important for women connected to the project. Their own past and traditions were used to engage in questions about structural and public exclusion, drawing on Patricia Hill Collins' analysis of Black feminist thought as constituted in resistance and in response to public exclusion (1991). Echoing Ashley's research, representation of minority heritage was simultaneously inward and outward looking and related to the women's position in wider society (2016).

### **5.3. Case study: BAM! Sistahood!**

The BAM! Sistahood! project was an excellent case study for a bottom-up perspective. Its location within a community-based organisation with an established practice of participation, learning and empowerment, exemplified knowledge-making that understood itself as contestatory and 'from below.'

In 2012, the Angelou Centre in Newcastle upon Tyne received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a heritage project focusing on BAMER (Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee) women in the North East of England.<sup>7</sup> A two-year research and development phase ran from 2012-2014, and was followed by a two-year delivery phase between 2014-2016. The setting in a women's centre was crucial to the heritage project's perspective. The women who accessed the BAM! Sistahood! project came from diverse backgrounds, mostly from the South Asian, African and Arabic diasporas. In general, many participants had arrived in the UK in recent years, while the project staff were either born in the UK, or had lived there for years or decades. Over the four years, the project engaged with over thirty ethnicities including Congolese, Nigerian, Syrian, Moroccan, South American, Zimbabwean, Ghanaian, Caribbean, Algerian, Iraqi, Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, Thai, Tamil, Iranian, Sierra Leonean, Chinese, Indonesian, and Romany women (Lewis and

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<sup>7</sup> The denotation BAMER was used in official documentation, as one of the terms used in public institutions, such as the, then, HLF.

Wieser, 2018). Some women who participated struggled with a variety of problems, such as economic exclusion, domestic violence and abuse, ill mental and physical health, asylum and residency issues.

The project entailed several strands – process, development, research, exhibitions, celebrations. Process included social exchange, planning and cultural demonstrations, mainly through the Heritage Café. Development included art workshops, skills development, digital training. The research strand consisted of the conducting and filming of oral history interviews, and the production of short films based on these interviews. It also included, for example, the research and creation of Wikipedia pages of notable women from the North East. Another strand was the creation of exhibitions, and several public events and seminars. Exhibitions were in public places such as at the Newcastle City Library and the Discovery Museum. The celebration strand included events at specific holidays, such as Christmas and Eid, and yearly project parties. Some of the events and much of the training was exclusively for women or Black and minority women (participation in sessions at the centre, i.e. training and Heritage Café sessions).

The Heritage Café was a weekly meeting at the Angelou Centre. The sessions functioned as a first introduction to the project for newcomers and were used to plan events such as trips, visits or celebrations, and to discuss and record heritage. It was run by a project facilitator, and was normally attended by 10-15 women, with a core of around 3-5 volunteers who attended regularly. I attended the sessions for one year as a research and digital facilitator. Some of the other participants had chosen specific roles, such as photography, interpretation or social media. The café was an open group session, and new women were referred to it by centre staff, or invited by participants. Often, introductory games were based on cultural exchange; they included an element of sharing of information about countries of origin, personal memories or interests. The sessions then included specific project tasks, such as the planning of celebration events or exhibitions and the recording and sharing of cultural heritage objects or photographs, or the recording of interviews. This included questions about what was needed for the digital archive and how women should be introduced to the project when they attend for the first time. The heritage café facilitator organised a cooking demonstration, identified as an important aspect of their heritage by many project volunteers. For this, the group went to a nearby community venue with a kitchen and two project volunteers cooked dishes from their countries of origin – one from Pakistan and one from Algeria – explained the recipes and ingredients as well as what they meant to them personally. The group then shared the meal. The process strand also involved several visits, such as one to the Discovery Museum to watch a play about suffragettes. The group undertook two visits to the exhibition *The Extraordinary Gertrude Bell* about the archaeologist Gertrude Bell at the



Great North Museum Hancock, Newcastle and one to the Gertrude Bell archives at Newcastle University.

The training components of the process strand were mostly carried out by individual trainers and artists, and most of the training accredited. This included photography training, art, poetry and digital workshops running over several terms, and on different levels. The training and art sessions produced a lot of the material exhibited in displays and presented at celebration events, such as poems, prints, felting and embroidery. The writing and art sessions served to record many of the women's personal experiences and their relationship with their past and culture.

Part of the research aspect of the project was to film interviews with women who have moved to the area. In the last year of the project, I joined a team to record interviews with women in the region. Some of the women interviewed were selected and arranged in advance, others were recruited on the day. The oral histories recorded were made into three films, one called 'Movement', which showed women's stories of migration, families and work, and 'Founders', which showed their political, social and arts activism. The recorded oral histories discuss community organisations in the North East and the women active in setting them up. The interviewees were part of past and present community networks and organisations, including the Angelou Centre in Newcastle, Salaam in Hartlepool, Apna Ghar in South Shields, the Buffalo Centre in Blyth, and Panah, the first Black women's refuge in Newcastle. The interviews in the 'Tapestries' film explored the experiences of younger Black and minority women and recent arrivals to the country. The research strand also included several visits to local museums and archives to find out more about the history of women in the North East of England, as well as to receive training as part of their volunteering qualifications.

Several exhibitions were held as part of the project and open to all, at the Discovery Museum and at several other public settings in Newcastle and the region. These were exhibitions of objects, photographs, films, arts and crafts. Celebration events were often public and held at community centres. They included music, speeches, food, poetry reading, singing and dancing. Some of these were formally planned activities such as a parade of BAM! volunteers wearing traditional clothes worn at special occasions, or games where women competed in the activities like the tying of African headwraps and a Hijab. Often BAM! volunteers presented artwork or crafts in stalls, as well as offering activities, such as henna painting.

## 5.4. Making bottom-up knowledge of women's migration

This section investigates the methods used to make knowledge claims about the past, analyses the content produced, and details obstacles encountered in making knowledge from diverse perspectives.

The claims to knowledge made by the project and its participants were varied. The project plan opposed the lack of richness of Black and minority women's history and heritage with its poor documentation and lack of representation in regional public representations, criticising a lack of depth in recorded narratives (BAM! Sistahood!, 2015, p. 1). The facilitator expressed frustration about public misrepresentation, stating that 'that's not the truth we get told' about the past (BAM 2, 2016). The introduction to the *Movement* exhibition accentuated the omission of women's migration stories, stating the representation of an 'undocumented and often forgotten chapter' (Movement Exhibition, 2016). The aim of the exhibition was to 'dismantle migration mythologies that permeate and fuel a biased historically inaccurate representation of the North East's ever increasing diversity.' (Movement Exhibition, 2016), framing the practices of BAM! Sistahood! as a corrective to an exclusionary image. One participant explained:

I think it's important to learn about all kinds of history. Not just the history ... that only benefits a certain kind of people. (BAM 3, 2016)

The coordinator explained that 'History is ... not set. There are things that have obviously taken place, that have happened. There's still a set of narratives ... narratives that have to be constantly challenged and understood' (BAM 1, 2016), highlighting that history-writing was contested. Two organisers, the project plan and several volunteers articulated the need to challenge established narratives for not being accurate or true. These viewpoints strongly emphasised the contested nature of historical knowledge, and presented it as such, for example in the public exhibition.

In response to this contested official history, the motivations and methods emphasised subjectivity. However, several interviewed participants and staff did not uphold subjectivist understandings of 'truth' – which would stress the impossibility or undesirability to decide which versions or narratives about the past are true. The coordinator asserted that even though things might not be written down, they nevertheless happened (BAM 1, 2016). She articulated that there were multiple narratives, but also cautioned that 'that has to be balanced with things that have taken place and things that need to be documented that are really important, that haven't been documented. I don't want to get too far into this post-modern – ...' (BAM 1, 2016). Two committed participants – trained as teachers – repeatedly emphasised the need to educate white people in Newcastle about diverse cultures, for example about Islam. This focus on education was based in their conviction

that there was something to teach, that was more accurate than white people's understanding at the present. While these views and the public exhibitions presented history-making as contested and actively shaped, it also upheld the belief in being able to assert some kind of truth about the things that really happened in the past.

In the first stages of the project, traditional historic and public knowledge repositories were explored as potential sources to tell these histories more reflective of 'things that have ... taken place' (BAM 1, 2016). On visits to local archives and the library, BAM! participants met, for example, with a local history society, who discussed with them the sources available and their use to the local historians. These sources were soon considered unhelpful for the research into Black and minority women's stories, however, first because of the lack of documentation and recording of this group within public institutions (BAM! Sistahood!, July 2015, p.5), and second because any documentation presented a 'reductive view of BAMER women's lives' (BAM! Sistahood!, 2015, p. 1). Wikipedia as a public knowledge repository was used by participants, but was at the same time considered inaccurate and incomplete by the organisers. Two Wikipedia edit-a-thons were organised to contribute and edit sites, in order to remedy some of the exclusions of the collaborative site (Currie, 2012).

Consequently, the main sources used by the BAM project to make knowledge about the past were testimonial – for example the oral histories or the writing of object descriptions for displays or recording in the archive. Participants' self-representation and voice was central to making knowledge about the past. Women defined what issues to address, what questions to ask, what objects to exhibit in public and how to describe them. This was to ensure that those 'previously omitted' from 'history and understanding' could tell their own stories (BAM 1, 2016). None of the participants had previous training in historical or heritage research, apart from the organiser, who alongside her day job at the centre was studying for a PhD. Their expertise was not unmediated and direct, but involved various methods and engaged in several training activities, such as oral history interviewing, photography and archival research. The project saw the value of women's self-representation in widening viewpoints, rather than seeing bottom-up representation or 'community ownership' as an automatic source of authenticity (Chan, 2017; Robertson 2008). The value of their viewpoints was their previous exclusion – the coordinator explained the need to enable the representation of 'any disenfranchised or marginalised voice' (BAM 1, 2016).

The content that emerged through the methods used discussed themes of identity, family and activism. Several scholars have remarked on identity and heritage processes as mutually informed and reinforcing (Graham, Howard, 2008; McLean, 2006), and Robertson has shown how bottom-up expressions of heritage strengthen communities' 'alternative constructions of identity' (Robertson, 2008, p. 147). Identity was a central

theme for BAM! Sistahood!, with heritage often defined through identity. Evident in the data gathered was a dynamic that heritage and identity were about both continuity *and* change. One of the most-used quotes by a Pakistani participant in promotion and written material was about change and transformation: 'Heritage is all about the features of history, culture, traditions, our life, which is passed on to next generation. We keep heritage with us but in one or other way we transform it, but the real soul stays there.' (Clarke and Lewis 2016). The repeated use of this quote in publications and exhibitions indicated an endorsement and valuing of this view by the organisers.

The sources employed – the oral histories and role of women in curating their own contributions – enabled a sense of multivocality in the content. This was also evident in the differences in opinion concerning culture as stable or dynamic. While most discussed changes and transformation as a part of culture, one participant stated in a consultation 'We have kept our culture, it has not changed' (Indian participant, elder) (Research Table 3, 2013/14). Interviewees Miranda and Madonna too stated views of continuity in the film 'Movement', voicing their desire to pass on certain customs and practices. This desire connected customs and how people *do* things, and how they have done them in the past, with the future, with the hope that these customs would be maintained, even when present older generations would not be there to practice them. Miranda and Madonna emphasised stability and, similar to other intangible heritage agents, were of the conviction that the practices were a 'faithful manifestation of what they have always been' (Skounti, 2009, p. 77).

Madonna: ... that's what we used to do in Africa, we brought that here with us and that's what we try to maintain. (Movement, 2016)

Both also saw a potential threat to their customs:

Madonna: Because like some of the food we cook, or some of the things we do – if we don't teach our children or let them know how to do it – that custom is gonna die!

Miranda: Yes, they forget. (Movement, 2016)

The element of threat to a custom or practice has been shown to be a trigger to acting on heritage practices and their protection (Harrison, 2013). In the context of migration, this threat, or vulnerability, is even more pronounced, as elders see younger generations adapting to a new society, and so the preservation of traditions becomes a more explicit task, requiring organisation and active commitment.

Knowledge about the past was central for practices of everyday life. A relation to the past was important for many processes, such as cooking, family and social relations and relations with society. For many of the participants and interviewees, personal memories and the sharing of them were framed as *essential* features of their lives, as situated in 'practices, materials, bodies and interactions with others' (Macdonald, 2013, p. 106).

Memories of their families, of their own lives and actions informed their actions in the present. A cooking demonstration for a small group of women showed the interrelation between family, personal memory and food. In the volunteer's memory, the dish and the cooking of it were connected to the memory of her mother.

Actually, my mum, when she sit in the kitchen, and she ... she never talks, she says sit with me and learn how to cook. So she sings the song and she likes ... not explaining, but she say, 'Watch and learn!' So I used to sit with her and ... I'm not sure that I'm cooking exactly like that, but ... I love that dish, and I miss my mum, whenever I eat.

During her cooking demonstration, she explained how her mother cooked the meal, how she cut the vegetables (without a chopping board), how to stir the soup (very slowly) and the memories she had of being with her mother while she was cooking. Her food and cooking heritage was a way of reactivating the memory of her mother and her own childhood, as well as sharing these memories, practices and the food with the other women, and showing them how to stir properly. The way the cook discussed the various aspects during cooking – smells, taste and practice – showed the ways relations with the past were embodied and the role the senses played in maintaining connections with the past (Macdonald, 2013, p. 90). This expression of an individual's relationship with her past framed her present actions as a living embodiment and continuation of her personal past. It presented her link with her family tradition, and with her continuation, as well as adaptation of this practice. This example also highlighted the importance of family for connections to the past, also noted in Rosenzweig and Thelen's study, which showed the high grade of emotional engagement with family or personal pasts (2013).

The BAM! project united the recording of heritage objects and practices (cooking, clothing, activism) and the *meaning* of those objects and practices. Participating women were asked to bring items to be photographed, and to write descriptions of them, including details about their personal value and meaning. The content production prioritised the intangible meanings over tangible and material aspects. Several participants brought objects to stand in for an 'original' that was not available, such as scanned and printed photographs or a snow globe of the Taj Mahal to discuss the significance of the building itself. This served to envelop objects with the stories and memories that constituted their importance to the women, to go beyond the material and abstract aspect of items. It added layers of interpretation and meaning – what Byrne calls 'feeling Heritage' (2008). Lived experience and practical skills and traditions were the main types of knowledge-making employed here. It was accessed as embodied forms of knowledge (Macdonald, 2013, p. 79; Enright and Facer, 2016), where the women were experts in their own lives (Cuthill, 2010). This, then, recorded migrant and minority lives and histories from their own perspectives (Taylor, 2010).

In the exhibition the group produced, displayed items recorded expressions of diverse identities: cultural, social and intellectual. Many were traditional cultural dress or cooking items. The descriptions explained the traditional and religious uses of items (in wedding ceremonies, for example), the specific techniques and skills used to produce items, or their personal meaning. Descriptions about the personal meaning objects held for them enabled a recording of the dynamic and living aspect of heritage (Kurin, 2004; Arizpe, 2004). Several of the exhibits also showed the impact of the new culture on identities. In the exhibition 'Arrivals', the display of a scarf, which had been given to the woman by her mother who had bought it at Fenwick's in Newcastle, was accompanied by the statement 'It is an essential symbol of my dress and identity, mixing fashion from the East and West as I settled here.' (Arrivals, 2015).

Several participants offered a very dynamic understanding of identity, for example by discussing the transformation of traditions. This theme was present in the *practices* of the whole project, where participants enacted and re-enacted relations with the past in their own ways. Some women discussed cultural traditions in positive as well as critical ways; for example, one participant mentioned the way her country of origin treated women. A young Eritrean interviewee in the 'Tapestries' film explained:

I respect culture, but culture is positive culture and negative culture. But we need to – if it's, that culture is positive or it's nice, you have to continue with that culture. But that culture, if it's bad for womens, ... for example circumcision; for women, it's really really bad culture, and the dudes they practice it, a lot of practice for womens is really bad. So I need to stop that culture, (that) is a bad cultural experience. (Tapestries, 2016)

The collective self-definition of 'Black' used by The Angelou Centre subsequently changed. The term 'Black and minority women' was adopted in the year following the interview above (Lewis and Wieser, 2017), showing the negotiation involved in collective identity formation.

In exhibition displays, oral histories and artistic expressions, Black and minority women expressed both their 'collective' as well as 'collected' memories (Macdonald, 2013). Most cultural expressions were based on multiple and partial perspectives that did not form a complete and unified group identity, but acknowledged differences within the group (Ramírez, 1996, p. 34). The Movement exhibition introduced 'a multitude of inspirational narratives that are both specific and universal journeys.' (Movement Exhibition, 2016). A felt collage on the other hand represented flags and national representations alongside each other, an expression of collected rather than collective memory. The flags, as well as the objects in the exhibitions, were all part of memories and statements that were presented together, without claims to these being shared and of importance to all women involved (Macdonald, 2013). Collective identities were however also negotiated during the project. A large lino print of a female figure, produced collectively by participants,

surrounded by patterns and symbols, as well as the words 'education', 'health', 'freedom' and 'love', was an expression of shared identity, representing issues affecting all participants. Producing the print together reinforced this collective statement. This *made claims* about these values being shared and of collective meaning (Macdonald, 2013, p. 15). In these expressions, diversity rather than homogeneity amongst the group was acknowledged (Waterton and Smith, 2010; Naidoo, 2005; Littler, 2008; hooks, 1994), while also building understandings of the shared issues that many of them faced.

Social networks were another theme that many oral histories explored. Madonna and Miranda from Sierra Leone explained the importance of groups beyond the family to their approach to child-rearing:

Miranda: In Africa, we – there's a culture that ... – a child is brought up not by the mother, but by the community, and we extended that here.  
(Movement, 2016)

The type of social support that a close community provided was remarked on a lot. In the film 'Movement', some of the elder women's stories discussed their arrival and connected these memories with leaving their families in India and living with their husbands' families.

When I came, I was unhappy and felt alone. I had left all my brothers, sisters and parents. I used to go to other people's house. We used to visit the family. Here, we had to stay indoors, because of the snow. Then I got used to it – and I didn't know any English as well! (Movement, 2016)

Other interviewees echoed this story of isolation. Many elder Indian women talked about not having families or not being able to visit neighbours and relatives, as they did in India. Another interviewee, who was born in the UK, detailed similar experiences of isolation: 'My parents came to this country and we had very little family here, ... we didn't have any other family, that was it, one auntie, who was my mum's eldest sister. So there were no grandparents, from either side ....' (Movement, 2016). Another interviewee, who came to England as a child with her family, states 'we were always targeted by other, white, children.' (Movement, 2016).

In the context of the lack of extended family and community that some of them experienced through migration, positive experiences with neighbours received more weight. Adah remembered a neighbour who 'was like family, she was like a grandmother, an older white lady who lived next door to us and she was just brilliant. So I'm very emotional about that. Because she was like family, a grandparent, a family I never had.' Shamshad, too, mentioned an older lady who lived next door (Movement, 2016).

The oral history film 'Founders', recorded a variety of activists' memories of the North East and the interviewees discussed their actions and reflected on changes in the past decades. One of the oral history interviewees explained that women came together in the 1980s and 90s to 'tackle some of the inequalities', and highlighted that many BME women

did not have access to basic services, as universal and women's services lacked cultural and language expertise to accommodate Black and minority women's needs. She bemoaned that it was necessary for the BME women's groups to start campaigning, stating 'every human being has a right to basic services. Why do we need to struggle and fight for our rights?' (Founders, 2016).

One of the activists outlined a vision the women had as a group

Being part of a very determined group of women who had this vision about having a place where Black women could come and be trained, be educated, ... reach a point where they could work. (Founders, 2016)

The importance of an active group of women who came together to support each other was highlighted in several of the interviews. They remembered the 1980s as a good time for Black women's activism. Another interviewee supported this feeling.

It was exciting, in the eighties, I've got to admit, it was a very, very exciting time to be here. Especially when you were part of the new young Black community, and you were making changes and you were helping other people educate themselves and you were fighting for rights and equality, respect, whether within education, within jobs, or whatever. And that wasn't just in Newcastle, it was national, it was all around the country, it was a very exciting time to be young and to be political. (Movement, 2016)

She added that she did not think young people were as political now as she was then, and stated she thought this was because there was no clear enemy to fight against – as they had Margaret Thatcher to fight – and issues were more blurred in the present. At the same time as explaining this change by a change in the historical context, she bemoaned this “me-generation”, implying that the responsibility did lie with young people. In this statement, the past seemed to be contained – the narrative did not reach into the present, apart from in her static memories. This was one of very few statements that was nostalgic and did not use engagement with the past for present use, to inspire herself or others. Rather, this used positive memories to bemoan a present perceived as inactive and apolitical.

Those women who were still part of the activist movements they had a part in forming never claimed that the vision they fought for in the 1980s was fulfilled. One interviewee specified positive changes, mentioning that there was increasing awareness of domestic violence, with increasing numbers of referrals happening from male members of families, concerned about daughters or relatives: 'When I think about where we were in terms of a Black community, where we are now: we have achieved a lot.' (Founders, 2016). At the same time, Fazeelat saw the struggle of the past as continuing in the present, with the same issues still prevalent, and the same people still fighting. Most interviewees similarly portrayed their actions as continuing, and still necessary. Text inserted in the film reported on centres facing uncertainty, stating 'there remain only 34 black-led funded women's organisations that provide specialist support to Black and minority women who have



experienced domestic and sexual violence.’ The phrase ‘there remain only’ clearly signals a story of decline. One of the interviewees expressed, ‘We think we’ve taken three steps forward two steps back.’ (Founders, 2016). Her and her colleagues’ narratives highlight improvements and deteriorations, analysing the successes of their activism and collaboration as dependent of specific circumstances and partly to do with luck. The past was thus not romanticised, alleviating Shopes’ worries of communities’ engagements with the past (Shopes, 2002, p. 597). The interviews mentioned here evidenced radical and critical uses of activist pasts, as for example researched by Smith and Cashman, who showed that often nostalgia for radical pasts can be used to criticise present society, rather than affirm the status quo (Smith, 2006; Cashman, 2006).

One of the main barriers to making knowledge about the past was a lack of time. Within a limited timeframe, training and social support was prioritised over the creation of outputs. This included the provision of space for women to share, the setting of ground rules to ensure mutual respect, openness and exchange. Most team members volunteered their time to the project work on top of their working hours. Several parts of the project, such as the accredited training, were especially time-consuming. The learners had to go through internal and external examination to pass the classes. It was often the job of the project facilitators to ensure the evidence was collected and learners met the course requirements, putting a lot of strain and responsibility on them. In the Heritage Café registration forms, translation and explanations took up a large part of the first hour. Latecomers additionally slowed the process down, through the repetition of introductions and procedural information.

Several aspects hindered a fully participatory and diverse creation of historical knowledge. In the introduction of the project for newcomers, the first explanation given was what ‘heritage’ meant. This question was posed every time – during my research, there were only a few participants who did not ask for an explanation of the word. The facilitator or a volunteer explained the word, mostly as ‘identity,’ ‘culture’, and ‘traditions’. A recurring question during the sessions was ‘what does heritage mean to you?’ – which was then influenced by the definition given at the start of the session. Often, debates used the words tradition, culture and identity, as well as ‘heritage,’ interchangeably. A broad understanding of ‘heritage’ the participants eventually agreed on was divided into three areas: Cultural and Aesthetic, Political and Social, Family and Identity (Heritage Research Table, 2013/14b). However, over the time span of the project, and the change in participants, certain definitions and documents decided on by previous participants, impacted later participants’ engagements. Thematic areas and heritage strands that emerged in the research stage were used to frame the project for new participants involved in the delivery phase of the project. New participants were introduced to these themes, without having been part in the framing of them. These themes sometimes

constrained them by imposing boundaries on how they contributed to the collective making of meaning and knowledge about the past.

The slightly chaotic nature of the setting at the Angelou Centre impacted on the research process. A lot of time was dedicated to the collective planning of content, for example, the collating of interview questions for the oral histories, or in participants' recording of objects' meaning to them. In practice, those who asked questions in oral history interviews seldom followed a plan that had been agreed by the group. Mostly, oral history interviewers followed their own interests, and the nature of questions asked impacted strongly on the stories told. I myself had an important role in editing the material. I developed versions of the films, guided by the coordinator's comments, until she agreed on the final edit. This demonstrated the importance of individual actors, as well as chance, in determining the course of the research, and the representation of the knowledge produced, for example in the oral history films.

A degree of regulation could be observed within the peer group in some of the planning and sharing sessions at the Heritage Café. At several instances, despite the openness of the call for objects or items to be brought in, self-censorship and group mediation could be observed. In one session, a participant brought in a photo, but then decided not to show it to the group. She said to me 'I don't think I did it right, it's embarrassing' – although there were no official guidelines of what they were 'allowed' to bring in and present as important to them. The participant, who refused to share her items, had brought photos that she liked and that, as far as I can tell, had no relationship to her traditional culture. I would not have expected anyone in the group to criticise her choice of images, and encouraged her to share them, but she decided they were not suitable. These instances showed that despite the welcoming and non-judgemental environment, individuals' actions were restricted informally. This supports social psychologist Kenneth Gergen's assertions of the social aspect of personal relations with the past, showing how personal relations with the past emerge in interchange with social conventions and expectations (Gergen, 1994), as well as Olick's remark that memorial practices are 'always simultaneously individual and social' (Olick, 2010, p. 158).

A similar instance happened when an exhibition was co-ordinated, and women were asked to bring objects important to them and write descriptions of them. A museum outreach worker came to the Heritage Café to talk to the women about the exhibition space and about their objects. She repeatedly asserted that heritage was whatever someone identified as important to them, that it was a living thing, and no one could prescribe what it was for someone else. One participant had brought in a book she said was one of her favourite books. She had read it several times, and had also lent it to a friend, also taking part in the project. But when it was her turn to present it, she was worried it was not 'appropriate'. It took a while to convince her that whatever she wanted

to display was 'appropriate'. In the end, she did add her object to the exhibition. It speaks however to her perception that her book, which was not traditionally 'cultural', stood out from the rest of the exhibited objects, which were more traditional objects, such as bowls, cooking items, jewellery – which all could be considered traditional heritage items. The resulting exhibitions were by no means homogeneous and portrayed a diversity of cultures and experiences. Informal group dynamics played a role in managing expectations of what was 'appropriate' and what was not. Diverse representations were somewhat limited by the expectations participants themselves had, or felt from the peer group, and by public or social ideas of what counted as 'heritage', or as important to share and remember (Popular Memory Group, 1998; Thomson, 1998).

What knowledge the BAM! project chose to present in exhibitions was also influenced by the wish to convey specific messages to external audiences. One discussion at a meeting between museum staff and project participants was about how all visitors could learn about diverse communities. One proposal said 'A museum is a bridge between communities', and one of the themes, which repeatedly came up during the project, was about the lack of knowledge white people had of BME communities in the North East. Museums and exhibitions were proposed as platforms for exchange and education, to combat this lack. One of the key participants who was very keen to explain her and other women's culture to white people from the North East asserted in hindsight, that 'there were a lot of changes through this project'. She pointed out, 'people asked, and they got to know us, and our dressing, our culture, and they are quite keen, they are asking questions, at exhibitions.' (Focus group 1, 2016). This wish to represent and explain showed their aspirations as mediators between their own groups and the larger and more powerful white majority (Macdonald, 2006; Ramirez, 1996, p. 22). This representation to a societal majority did, however, also influence the content told, with a 'particular, positive framing' also observable in some, but not all, elements of the BAM! project (Ashley, 2014, p. 49).

This analysis of the activities and representations of the BAM! Sistahood! project shed light on the use of self-representation and oral testimony in making knowledge about the lived experience of migration, providing an 'inner history' of migration (Orsi, 2002, quoted in Taylor, 2010, p. 266). The descriptions and explanations in exhibitions also enabled an understanding of the meaning women conferred to past experiences and present objects. How they valued the past – their heritage-making – provided insights into their 'sense of the past' as an important part of history (Samuel, 1994, p. 15). The analysis also demonstrated limitations to the participatory approach, detailing the impact of time limitations and perceptions of what was expected or appropriate on the knowledge created.

## 5.5. Positioning knowledge about the past as public

Interviews with organisers and participants revealed how the knowledge produced was positioned and the ways the histories presented in the content were linked to a valorisation of the past – heritage. Further, data from documents and interviews, as well as the content, showed how the knowledge created was presented as having public import.

Issues discussed were located at the intersection of personal and public issues, with activities and discussions about heritage, identity and family also having a political or ‘public’ intention, and contesting what counted as of public import. Engagements with the past were often personal, such as for example in the cooking demonstration, and in displays of personal objects and childhood memories. Personal and family connections and meaning of heritage was central to the relations with the past established by the project. Not all of those made specific claims to be of public import. But the unit of the family was also the location where issues of wider concern, such as domestic abuse, were discussed. No survivors of domestic abuse discussed this issue in the final films, also out of a concern for ‘safety’. One interviewee discussed domestic abuse in a filmed interview, which a project worker did not deem safe to be publicised. These issues were thus removed from the final cut. Women who were interviewed as activist organisers, however, discussed their involvement in raising awareness of domestic violence, clearly demarcating it as not a private but a public issue (Okin, 1991), as in this quote from the ‘Founders’ film:

There are still a lot of women that suffer silently, their families suffer silently, because they will be castigated by the rest of the community, they will be ostracised by the rest of the community, and this would be even immediate family. (Founders, 2016)

The examples detailed stories of women’s individual and collective agency, their interactions with the wider minority communities, as well as with wider society. It also highlighted economic constraints. Memories of ‘family’ were also often linked to wider issues of ‘community’ and the building of social networks, following experiences of isolation as newly arrived migrants. Notions of family were often used to extend to the wider networks, as was also noticeable in the project name ‘BAM! Sistahood’. Miranda and Madonna explained that they started organising social events because of the lack of family networks, and an isolation some felt.

Miranda: I suppose again, it was formed to ... to bring people together. Because I’m in my house, you’re in your house, the students are there, they don’t know who’s who or what’s going on. It’s to bring people to an awareness of who’s around and just as a social, initially it was all as a social event.

Madonna: Just sort of, you to know where, 'You're not alone, there's somebody there, in case you need help.' (Movement, 2016)

These social events led into wider community organising activities, where, for example, fundraising activities were undertaken, or civic events supported and participated in. Often, personal experiences in family and community were connected to types of social and political action (Lister, 1997), asserting them as publicly relevant.

Political and community activism was connected to wider societal developments in many ways. Text in the 'Founders' film talked about a quarter of services that have been lost, and 'closures continue to threaten centres' also due to a 'shortfall in funding' (Founders, 2016), situating women's experiences within the context of austerity, thus marking these issues as political and public. Often, rather than disinterested in wider social or structural contexts (Myers, 2006; Thelen, 2000; Dresser, 2010), activities that highlighted identity, family and community were also used as ways of engaging with public issues and with wider society.

Relations with the past were in many cases not confined to the individual woman or their 'group's' past experiences. The way knowledge of the past was of shared rather than fragmented importance was evident in the strong engagement a lot of women felt with suffragette histories. One interviewee described her experience of seeing a play about suffragette activism:

We saw what the women went through, before we could stand as women in this country. I was so shocked, because I thought it was only in Africa, that people had to suffer like that, to fight for women to vote, for women to have power to do things, so I was - I was so touched, I was crying, I was; 'Oh my god! So people really went through all this for us! Oh, dear me!' ... - So it's really really touching and I was inspired. (Focus Group 1, 2016)

While several BAM! activities strengthened traditional cultural identities, potentially portraying them as separate from the regional culture, other activities and engagements changed those identities. Through encounters with suffragette activism, this past became part of the participants' own history too. Some described the histories of suffragettes, or experiences of Tyneside women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as actions that happened 'for us'. Thus, engagements with the past were both open in terms of what historical actors could become part of the reference group (Collin *et al.*, 2016, p. 171). Similarly, one interviewee discussed her family's experiences as refugees and described how this opened her to others' experiences.

So all of that, right from my mother and father fleeing Kashmir, India, to myself being in England, I think is history in itself, (...) And when I'm working with refugees here, I kind of start thinking ... (Movement, 2016)

She added that her family's experiences served as a 'reminder' when encountering, for example, Syrian refugees. In this example, past experiences, and transmitted family

memories, are used to relate to others and moving outward. Past personal and family experiences were not confined to one separate group and privatised, as per the academic Zuckerman's worry (2000), but rather used to connect to wider issues, and other members of society.

Further, a few of the descriptions and interviews showed the role of external societal representations played in the formation of personal or collective identities. One display in the 'Arrivals' exhibit described the participant's black doll, which she had received from her mother, bought in London, as important for her sense of identity:

Agnes has a very deep symbolic meaning and importance for me. She's my childhood doll and I've had her all my life. ... In terms of my self-identity and self-image, one is not really going to get a lot of positive images unless you have parents who actively seek it out for you.' (Arrivals Exhibition, 2015).

Questions about self-definition and the role of an oppressive context, and violence, was also discussed in one of the films:

We use the term Black, because – to denote violence and oppression on grounds of race and gender. Because subsequently, the Black and minority ethnic, and the Black Asian and minority ethnic, and the Black Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee continues to divide and further subdivide us – that's how we see it. But I can accept that some people are not comfortable with the term Black, but we've reclaimed it and we're quite comfortable with using it, because it defines what we are, and it also defines the resistance that we've made to the oppression that we've experienced. (Umme, Founders, 2016)

Umme's reflections on the claiming of definitions and self-definitions as 'Black' showed the dialectic of oppression and activism – the formulation of ideas in the face of their suppression – which Collins sees as the basis of Black feminist thought (Collins, 1991, p. 6). This societal context clearly demarcated issues of 'identity' as 'of common concern' for society (Fraser, 1992, p. 129), and as Young argues, expressions by 'differentiated social groups' have to be understood as citizens contributing to democratic discussions in the public sphere to solve shared problems (2000, p. 7).

Concerning the location in public space, public elements, such as events, seminars and exhibitions at public institutions, were a central focus of the BAM project. The holistic and supportive process embraced by BAM! centred both around making women confident in presenting their own heritage *and* doing this in public. The act of making women's heritage public was present in the whole project, as expressed in one participant's statement that throughout the project, 'we represent our culture whenever we are outside' (Focus group 1, 2016), and another one expressing pride about the 'big platform we achieved in a museum' (Focus group 2, 2016).

However, the coordinator stressed that its main aim was to support Black and minority women, even if this meant doing so separately from wider society. She explained: 'You

look at anything that's successfully worked, in terms of people of colour or for women's communities and it's been about people separately setting up their own spaces and understanding things, reinserting, reclaiming, rather than putting right a system that is wrong. ... Because it's a waste of energy, and also, whose responsibility is it?' (BAM 1, 2016). The organiser thus did not see creating a mainstream public element as the priority of the project. The many elements of the BAM! project can instead be read as an example of a 'counter public'; a 'training ground' where women come together to build confidence, and also to assert themselves vis-à-vis other publics (Fraser, 1992, p. 124). This was not a simple choice to remain separate, but a pragmatic response to an exclusionary system.

Several considerations played a role in the process of making participants' heritage engagements and historical knowledge public. One obstacle during efforts at public representation and engagement was hostile or challenging encounters in public spaces. During one visit to a museum exhibition, while the group was walking around the exhibition and discussing the displays, they were asked by two other visitors to be quiet. These elderly white women asserted that they wanted to watch a film displayed at the exhibition, and could not hear the sound due to the talking. The facilitator went to complain to a museum warden, who listened to the complaint, but did not take action in any way. In her repeated frustrated accounts of the experience, the facilitator always mentioned that the film was subtitled, so silence was not needed to watch it. With this assertion she aimed to stress the absurdity of the request made by the other visitors. She was noticeably annoyed, and described the manner of the other visitors as disrespectful and aggressive.

As visitors themselves, the elderly white women did not themselves hold formal power in the space, but their assured demeanour and confidence gave them the capital to enact their will and assert their view of what a museum should be, and indeed what interpretation of the exhibit was admissible. Considering it is likely that the silencers overheard the group's critical engagement with the display, their act can be seen as a direct and successful attempt to prevent debate and a diversity of opinions. When the facilitator mentioned this incident to a museum worker at a later visit, the worker was appalled. She asserted that she saw museums as places for people to discuss their opinions and reflect on, rather than quietly absorb information. This showed the disconnect between museum theory which stresses the dialogue and confrontation exhibitions should entail (Lynch, 2013; Kidd, 2014; Whitehead, Lloyd, Eckersley, Mason, 2015) and museum practice and audiences, who can enforce or enact a more traditional understanding of the museum's public space, where information is transmitted rather than questioned. If museums cherish critical voices, as is often asserted in the literature, then this must be facilitated by staff on the ground, as otherwise the prevalent climate of hushed absorption is likely to continue.

Another example of tacit conflict within museum spaces took place at an exhibition training session at a local museum. The role of ‘difference’ in public places was a source of conflict here. Some participants stated that the role of museums was to show difference between people and help visitors understand diverse cultures and traditions. There was a debate about this, and the museum’s outreach worker proposed that museums should show shared humanity rather than focus on difference. A BAM! volunteer responded, ‘Yes, we are all humans, but we use different means to live our lives.’ This type of response from the outreach worker fell into a narrative that denies that cultural, ethnic and gender difference is a reality or an important factor in everyday life as well as in heritage work. The statements show a conflict here between a belief in an abstract universality and those that conceive of awareness of difference as important to enable shared human encounters. This belief that public issues and places should be for everyone, and thus that difference should *not* be discussed is part of a framework that while proposing universality, excludes those who do not conform to its standards (Young, 1990). The outreach worker’s repeated challenge to the importance of difference can be analysed in a colour-blind discourse, which is proud of the fact that it does not see ‘race’, ethnic difference, or skin colour. Denying this difference, however, as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva argues, serves to uphold a racially structured society (2004). While museum scholars have emphasised the importance of museum staff acknowledging the power differentials between themselves and community partners, this example also supports findings showing challenges of dealing with institutional racism in practice (Lynch and Alberti, 2010).

The knowledge created in the project contested traditional definitions of publicness, asserting issues connected with the family as well as of personal belonging and difference to be as of common concern, which at times led to conflict in public settings.

## **5.6. Effects of knowledge-making in the present**

Knowledge-making of the past had various effects in the present, contributing or challenging inequalities. Knowledge-making was argued to include claims to accuracy and contested ‘truth’, while being strongly linked with value. A statement in the introduction of the Movement exhibition about the dismantling of ‘migration mythologies that permeate and fuel a biased historically inaccurate representation of the North East’s ever increasing diversity.’ (Movement Exhibition, 2016) directly linked ‘historical inaccuracy’ to ‘bias’ – not merely bad scholarship, or an academic issue. One volunteer expressed the connection between knowledge about the past and feeling valued in society:

Because usually, when they grow up, children find out ‘I didn’t learn about everything!’ and so they may feel betrayed, or they may feel excluded, or



they may feel undervalued, that they don't mean anything to the world, or the part of society, of the history that they were learning about. (BAM 3, 2016)

The project linked historical knowledge to societal value (Collins, 1991), and analysed the 'historically inaccurate representation' as having direct effects on society as a whole, as well as on those misrepresented. One volunteer described her understanding of heritage as increasing her children's confidence when confronted about their visible difference from the majority population.

My children are trying to find out who they are.... Then, if you tell someone properly, then people get to know, and they become friends. So my children, the next generation, they'll be informed properly, they'll be confident. Otherwise, they'd be lost. (Focus group 1, 2016)

One of the project coordinators stressed the social effect of knowledge about *everybody's* historical contributions:

So there's some people who genuinely believe that everything of notable worth has come from Europe, and that's it. And I think that's one of the biggest barriers to ... people appreciating each other and ... humanity being the human family, because if you think, 'ooh, only some people are capable of doing anything of worth,' then you're not gonna ... value other people as much, you're not gonna be as interested or you're only gonna have a certain way of thinking - perceiving them. (BAM 2, 2016)

In this statement, she indicated that a Eurocentric understanding of history – the exclusive valuing of the achievements of Europeans – was a barrier to mutual respect, and 'humanity being the human family.' In this, a lack of knowledge of the past of non-European historic achievements is linked to the lack of appreciation of non-Europeans in the present. She went on to state that more critical learning would contribute to the creation of a more cohesive society (BAM 2, 2016). This conviction of the link between public knowledge about what people have done in the past and social life together in the present was shared by her colleague who saw the knowledge of women's actions in the past, unearthed by the BAM! project, as fundamental for society.

Basically, it's about working towards a way of people living and being together, and it's like how can you do that if you have a really obscured sense of what has happened in the past. (BAM 1, 2016)

A lack of understanding of who has played a role in the past – that it was not just the historical actors we currently know about – was seen as detrimental to societal exchange.

Misrepresentation in public was also linked to the undervaluing of Black and minority women as historical agents, *by themselves*. The projects plan's emphasis on the need to support women 'to value their own part in regional heritage making' (BAM! Sistahood!, 2015, p.27) turned out to involve challenges. The valorisation of women's stories, that their experiences were important subjects for historical research, was a fundamental task for facilitators as well as peers. The participants needed constant reminding, from staff or

peers, that they had something important to say, and indeed, that they already had contributed important understanding.

Adeola: I haven't learnt anything.

Ismat: Yes, you did, you wrote poems, with (facilitator), ... . And I remember that it was about our own story, history. ... It was all ourselves... I told my story to my friends and they helped me to write it down. I don't know how it became poetry. (Focus group 1, 2016).

Uma: I want to say a lot, but I don't know how to start. Whenever I sit with my friends, in the session, each time I'm learning to talk. ... It's very big for me to talk, because opening heart is hard, we suffered lots of things. ... I'm learning to be strong, to talk and stand up for myself and stand up for others. Thanks to Angelou Centre, thanks to (the facilitator), thanks to each session, tutors, they giving more confident, they're giving time to talk, they encouraging us not to sit in depression. (Focus Group 1, 2016)

In this sense, participants needed reassuring that their stories were important and that they were capable of creating art and writing poetry to record their experiences. The public discourse about whose past was valuable, which excluded Black and minority women, together with wider factors of structural oppression these women faced, did not only have an impact on *public* representations, but also on women's personal and emotional engagement, making it difficult for them to value their own knowledge. The writing of poetry, the creation of art and specifically their public display and reading served as a valorisation of these stories as significant and important (Ashley, 2014).

In response to this undervalorisation, one aim of knowledge about the past for BAM! participants was to improve personal feelings of continuity, rootedness and wellbeing. Exchange with other women about traditions and heritage practices, such as head ties, head scarfs and cooking, in a welcoming environment contributed to participants' feelings of wellbeing and self-confidence. The atmosphere of the Angelou Centre was central to many participants' experience, with the social, personal and practical support at the Centre being essential and necessary for some women. Several interviewees pointed towards the importance of basic confidence-building work of the project. One participant remarked, 'I enjoy being around all the other women. Learning, sharing together.' (Volunteer, 2016). Social sessions, such as the heritage café, and art workshops were central to personal well-being.

It (poetry workshop) helped me to write my feelings, when I was very stressed at home. I wrote it. And I read it in the event. (Focus group 1, 2016)

The close relations to the group were further central to positive experiences:

Ismat: You know the name itself is showing you the BAM! Sistahood! – so we are like sisters, and we came from different part of the world, we are not blood relation, but ... whenever we come here and work as a volunteer, or see each other, just it give us confidence. ...

Uma: Yes, it is true.

Ismat: Yes, we are sisters. (BAM Focus group 1)

These personal and affective consequences of heritage were not isolated, but rather linked to social, cultural and political effects.

One political effect of the project was to enable Black and minority women to think of themselves as change-makers. For Black and minority women, historical knowledge was considered important in political terms; for example, a lack of knowledge of past experiences of activism and strategies of contestation hindered present activism. The filmed oral histories of community organisations and activist networks presented in the exhibit attempted to make participants, as well as members of the public, more aware of women as historical agents, as capable and active in driving change. Knowledge about past activism was described by many as 'inspirational' (Focus group 1, 2016; BAM 1, 2016; BAM 4, 2016). The clear link between knowledge about the past and political change was expressed by this volunteer, discussing the possible effects of museum displays:

Maybe it will change, if we educate the younger generation. I see a lot of families in the museum with their children, it makes me think we need more women's voices there, ... at least one by one, we can give support ... More history, more revolution will come. (Focus group 2, 2016)

This stated the awareness of a tradition of previous activism and thought as an important basis for action.

Celebratory heritage accounts of community achievements have been criticised for not sufficiently engaging with structural change and continuing inequality (Littler, 2008; Tosh, 2008; Myers, 2006). However, the valorisation of specific pasts connected to women was not affirmative of present social structures, but aimed to transform them by demanding a role in their negotiation. A main political impact of the knowledge created by the project was this challenge to the existing structures of cultural valorisation (Young, 1990; Fraser and Honneth, 2003).

The project aimed to transform these structures by enabling Black and minority women to participate in debates about history and heritage, and transform the structures that placed value and importance on specific pasts and people (Kinsley, 2016). The BAM! project was particularly critical of present structures of knowledge-making in museums and academia, where 'a lack of cultural awareness, a culturally diverse workforce, an inability to access or work with vulnerable communities,' which together prevented the heritage sector from working with 'BAMER communities' (BAM! Sistahood!, 2015, p. 2). The organisers therefore argued 'against the exclusion of marginalised voices from systems of knowledge production and critical dialogues about that production' (Clarke and Lewis, 2016, p. 135). Knowledge-production was linked here to social structures. Challenging these also included practical efforts to change the makeup of heritage institutions' staff, such as by investing in Black and minority women's training to improve their skills in archiving, digital

photography, editing and oral history interviewing and heighten their employability. This was envisaged to change history and heritage-making in the long-term by 'giving them the skills to sustain this engagement as a journey of life-long learning.' (BAM! Sistahood!, 2015, p. 2-3). The valuing of women as 'active heritage makers and potential archivists' (BAM! Sistahood!, 2015, p. 26) was also a challenge to the structures that did not recognise women as makers of knowledge about the past. Knowledge structures were very clearly considered as part of wider structures of social oppression (Collins, 1991; Fricker, 2007; Young, 1991).

The effects of the bottom-up perspective of knowledge-making were varied and linked the personal, social, cultural and political. They were both aiming to improve personal wellbeing, with the social exchange within the project a strong aspect of the women's experiences of it, as well as challenging institutionalised structures of knowledge-making that excluded Black and minority women as decision-makers and as historical actors.

## **Summary**

This chapter analysed the BAM! Sistahood! Project and how it created knowledge about as well as conferred value to the past. Knowledge here was understood as political and as having tangible and specific effects. The motivation for the project was fundamentally about the lack of knowledge and a lack of valorisation of Black and minority women's experiences in the area, a lack considered detrimental both to the women themselves, and to the North East. The participatory methodology of this knowledge-making aimed to ensure the representation of a diversity of voices, with the content analysis showing how the project recorded women's experiences and the meaning of cultural activities as well as community activism for them. An analysis of the publicness of the knowledge created showed a contestation of what counted as public, including issues of belonging, identity and family in its understanding. It also emphasised the barriers to public access. The chapter finally analysed the positioning of knowledge as strongly linked to value, and discussed the effects of the project's knowledge-making in an unequal present.

Significant here is the structural approach taken by the organisers. The participants' experiences too enlighten the structural context and present effects of exclusion, as well as inclusion – in historical knowledge representations. In this understanding, 'history' is not separated from the present, but continuous, as it links the past with the present through structural, as well as personal, persistence. It was because of this that exclusion in historical knowledge was directly linked to the configuration of present institutions in society. The process of making knowledge about the past was at the same time seen as potentially transforming present institutional structures. A structural critique similar to

Laura Tabili's in chapter 3, was noticeable here and further comparisons between the three approaches to knowledge-making are explored in the next chapter.

## 6. MAKING HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE PUBLIC IN THE PRESENT

### Introduction

This chapter draws together the insights from the three previous chapters, which focussed respectively on academic publications on histories of migration to and minority groups in the North East, the museum's representation of historic migration in the Destination Tyneside exhibit and the bottom-up Black and minority women's project BAM! Sistahood. It compares these perspectives on knowledge-making in respect of their motivations, production, publicness and effects. The chapter examines how these three perspectives approach the question of why the past matters in the present, and how they function within and impact on an unequal present. The first section of the chapter, on motivations, highlights differences in ontological and epistemological perspectives, especially in terms of the continuity or discontinuity with the past perceived by researchers when engaging in history-making. The next section investigates the production of knowledge about the past in terms of the use of sources. This is followed by a comparison of the public aspects of the content produced, and how these redefine or accept understandings of what issues count as of common concern. Finally, the chapter explores the effects of the three accounts and how they either challenged or confirmed the *status quo*.

### 6.1. Positioning the knower

The motivation to engage in knowledge-making about the past stated by academics, museum professionals and bottom-up practitioners revealed both important similarities and differences. Each group framed their own position in relation to their research very differently, some emphasising proximity, others distance. Further, while respondents from each perspective stated the role of knowledge of the past as fostering critical engagement and enabling change, these statements had different emphases in terms of action. The interviews showed that there was heterogeneity within the perspectives, while certain ideas were prevalent in each case, mirroring positions within the academic history and heritage literature.

There were considerable differences in how the three perspectives conceived of the position of the knower in relation to the past and history. While some saw themselves as outside observers, others framed themselves as involved insiders. Most academics' responses as well as half of the museum staff (one of whom was a trained historian) conceived of their relationship with the past and history in terms of critical distance,

considering personal connections to the past as important *for others*, but not for themselves. They perceived an attachment to the past as important for other people, while framing their own position as detached. This outside view was considered important in bringing critical perspectives on the present, and in studying the past on its own terms, as much as possible (Historian 5, 2016; Historian 2, 2016; Historian 3, 2016; Museum 1, 2016, Museum 4, 2016). Most respondents in the bottom-up project, as well as two museum respondents, saw themselves as situated in close connection with the past (Museum 2, 2016; Museum 3, 2016; BAM 1, 2016; BAM 4, 2016). They talked about the past as *their* past and were interested in their own origins. A sense of continuity between the past and the present was central to many of the BAM! participants' statements, and was very explicit in the agenda of the project organisers. The BAM! group stressed the existential necessity of relations with the past for people in the present, with the participants talking about 'finding my own identity' and 'who I am' (BAM 3, 2016; BAM 5, 2016). These expressions saw the individuals of the present as in continuity of the past that they were researching and presenting, the research being in some way about *themselves*. These views expressed differences in the ontological perspective of the knowledge-maker – as either part of, or external, to the issues that were investigated. There was, then, in these interviews a clear difference in the weight given to point of view in asserting knowledge, one prioritising distanced, positivist knowing, and the other subjectivity and positionality (Code, 1998). These views mirror the perspectives of the scholarly literature. The role of historical knowledge expressed by some academic historians acts as a separate and distanced tool that is employed to the analysis of present events (Tosh, 2008; Guldi and Armitage, 2014). Many heritage scholars, by comparison, clearly state the centrality of 'identity' for the exploration of heritage (Smith, 2006; Graham and Howard, 2008; McLean, 2006; Robertson, 2008; Crooke, 2010), and thus concentrate on the direct link between people in the present and their pasts. Two models of positioning emerge from this: one distanced outside view, followed mainly by academics and some museum staff, the other an involved insider view, followed mainly by BAM! and the remaining museum staff. These perspectives on positioning have several implications.

The distanced perspective is potentially problematic, if the researcher is nevertheless influenced by personal experiences. These history and museum approaches aspired to a universalised perspective that pursued objectivity. For many academics, however, personal background was important: when asked, several academics acknowledged the importance of their own personal and family background to their research and work (Historian 2, 2016; Historian 5, 2016; Historian 6, 2016). Museum staff subscribing to the distanced view also asserted personal connections to the area and its history (Museum 1, 2016; Museum 4, 2016). At the same time, many of those who held the distanced view,

voiced the conviction that once personal and ethical relations were acknowledged, they should be put aside. They articulated the idea, either that their own past had no effect on their work and ideas, or the conviction that their personal and ethical positions could be acknowledged and discarded. The bottom-up perspective on the other hand emphasised the particularity of knowledge positions – of the importance of social positioning and associated experiences. It adopted an epistemic model that allowed them to consider themselves as part of history. While the distanced view upheld that social positioning *could* be put aside, others saw taking their location as knowers into account as necessary for the formulation of a standpoint. This finding supports Smith's critique of the assumed neutrality of heritage experts, who she argues nevertheless have a deep personal, and indeed emotional, investment in their work (2006; Smith and Campbell, 2016).

This is problematic, if uttered by those in positions of power, such as members of authorised knowledge institutions. A consequence of this atomistic idea of human existence and the making of knowledge was expressed by Tabili. She saw the importance of her research in enlightening racist structures, *that she considered herself a part of too*. This is important in highlighting that human developments and processes are linked, with groups' and individuals' experiences positioned in relation to each other, rather than distinct (Brown, 1992). It clearly articulated the situatedness of knowers and agents in historically constituted power relations. Those privileged in social hierarchies take their positions – their maleness and whiteness, for instance – to be the norm, and not particular (Mirza, 1997). In academic discourse – rather than in individual interviewees' statements – dominant perspectives tend to be normalised, and their particularity universalised (Code, 1998), through the belief that particularity could be set aside.

A potential problem of the situated perspective, such as that of the BAM! participants, would be if this positioning led knowers to a lack of critical engagement with the past and the present. Interviewees who highlighted continuity with the past however also expressed that knowledge of their own past was necessary to engage critically with the world. The museum staff's comment on the use of cultural heritage to 'develop a critical approach to what you're being told' is one example of this (Museum 3, 2016). Many for whom the past was important in terms of identity were comfortable with ideas of change and critical engagement with their heritage. This did not romanticise a static past, but emphasised the need for change. Often, the need for the past was mentioned in conjunction with terms such as 'power' and 'inspiration,' and the BAM! organiser talked about how past activism 'inspires people to be able to keep *continuing this tradition* of resistance and activism.' (BAM 1, 2016), an idea also mentioned by one academic supporter of the situated view (Historian 4, 2016). The emphasis of the BAM! participants was on the power and inspiration they drew from the past, seeing engagements with the past as opening up spaces for the future. An important finding from this thesis, therefore, is that the search for



personal continuity with the past did not preclude critical engagement. In the interviews, a personal link to the past did not lead individuals and groups to 'romanticize the past', as feared by Shopes (2002), but rather as a foundational position to address and potentially contest issues in the present. My findings echo Smith's research that shows the role that personal identity and involvement have in heritage work, but also the active way heritage is used to critically engage with the world (Smith, 2006; Boym, 2002). Similar to feminist epistemologies that see a direct interrelation between knowledge and action (Code, 1998; Ramazanoğlu, 1993; Collins, 1991), at the centre of the bottom-up perspective was a conviction that knowledge had practical consequences. The BAM! women, with their interest in personal connections to the past, also felt empowered by this knowledge to effect change, while a minority of academics who articulated a more detached view also connected knowledge with action and change.

Thought and action were linked in many ways, in both the situated and the distanced perspectives. The situated perspective of BAM! participants, some museum staff and the minority of historians, as well as some academics who had a detached approach, saw the use of the past in connection to *action*. The remainder of those who embraced the detached perspective tended to emphasise abstract intellectual enquiry and distanced critical thinking and understanding. Several academics' statements about history as a critical tool did not explicitly contain ideas about active change, but emphasised critical thought, such as the effort to make students think critically about media representations, migration and stereotypes, for students 'to be critical in the way that they approach politics, the media, society, etc.' (Historian 2, 2016) and in the role of historical knowledge to 'understand the present' (Historian 3, 2016). Several of the museum staff also mentioned the importance of historical knowledge in critical thinking, such as to 'question the world they live in' (Museum 4, 2016). Knowledge was also seen as empowering and as having potentially practical consequences by both those who did not see themselves as part of history, as by those who did. Academic interviewees, both those who embraced a distanced view, as well as those who considered themselves as situated, emphasised the use of historical knowledge to empower people (either themselves or others) to change things. They voiced convictions about challenging the *status quo*, for instance the practice of teaching about how Conservatives got into power and why their 'ideas dominate stuff' in order to empower students to change things (Historian 5, 2016). Knowledge about racist structures in the past was expressed as important to help dismantling them (Historian 1, 2016). These expressions reflect ideas about history as an emancipatory tool, that shows alternative perspectives on the present (Zinn, 2009), with the message that "things don't have to be like they were, you can change them." (Historian 5, 2016).

Two positioning perspectives have been identified and compared here – a distanced view on history, subscribed to by academics and some of the museum interviewees, and an involved view subscribed to by BAM! participants and the other half of the museum interviewees. While the first stressed the role of the past and knowledge about it from an outside view, that foregrounded critical distance, the other embraced a close personal connection to the past. However, many holding the distanced view actually admitted to the importance of their personal background for their research. Conversely, many who stressed a personal relation to the past did use this in critical ways to engage with the present. This, rather than seeing research choices as predetermined by background, considers them as often influenced by personal experiences, as acknowledged by many researchers above and in the scholarly literature (Jordanova, 2006; Kean and Ashton, 2009; Hall, 2017). It is important to investigate, just what proximity and distance offer to research about the past. A discussion of the perspective on the *making* history and heritage reveals the types of insights gained from both inside as well as outside perspectives.

## **6.2. Making historical knowledge: using sources and filling gaps**

The three case studies offered different approaches to the making and production of knowledge about the past. Raphael Samuel's and Hilda Kean's works argue for the importance of understanding the process of the making of history, to show how the past – what has *happened* – becomes history – what is *known* about the past (Samuel, 1994; Kean and Ashton, 2009; Kean, 2010). Academic history-making has been described as dependent on the available records, researchers asking questions, investigating sources and debate within the academic community (Kushner, 2001; Arnold, 2000; Morgan, 2006; Carr, 2006; Appleby, Hunt, Jacob, 1994; Jordanova, 2006). Non-academics' historical knowledge-making has been argued to add viewpoints, personal insights (Pente *et al.*, 2015), and ethnographic expertise (Dresser, 2010) to this, while museums have been proposed as spaces where multiple perspectives on truth can enter into dialogue (Golding, 2014), and established narratives can be contested (Kidd, 2014). Museums have also been examined as institutions that legitimise versions of the past (Gouriévidis, 2014). An investigation of different methodological approaches elucidates how each perspective located and justified their respective claim to make knowledge about the past.

All three perspectives on the past explored in the case studies made claims to knowledge – to give an account of the past that was factual or accurate. Several academics saw their work in offering accurate academic histories as opposed to public myths or community hagiography (Armstrong, 2007; Hackett, 2009; Copsey, 2002; Renton, 2007). Destination Tyneside cited information and factuality as important, with the aims of 'increasing

understanding' and stating contribution to public discussions in an 'informed way' (Little, 2013, p. 2). BAM! also referred to accuracy and the need to 'dismantle migration mythologies that permeate and fuel a biased historically inaccurate representation of the North East's ever increasing diversity' (Movement, 2016). The BAM! exhibition texts emphasised the previously flawed depiction of the area, positioning itself as a corrective to previous representations, as is often the case in exhibitions (Lidchi, 1997, p. 136). While the bottom-up position emphasised the *contested and situated* nature of historical knowledge and the process, it did not lead to a 'subjectivist' understanding of knowledge (that there is no reality external to the knower). It did not consider the past as unknowable, or relative, rather it asserted it as contested, and hinted at the importance of social location of the knower (Mills, 1998), from whose standpoint claims to knowledge are made. These examples showed the way accounts were presented in terms of their knowledge about the past, relying on ideas of accuracy or factuality. Knowledge of them was important, because migration *happened*. These histories – knowledge about the past – thus made truth claims about a relationship of the accounts to past reality (Bonner, 2013; LaCapra, 2001).

The three perspectives used different methods and sources to produce these more accurate histories, with the choice of evidence and sources impacting upon the nature of historical contents. The use and responses to the traditional historic record was driven by specific aims and priorities in each case. One of the functions of the Destination Tyneside display was about audience development. For the museum, the realisation that BME visitors did not engage with their displays impacted on the museum's decision to develop new content and led to the creation of Destination Tyneside. The specific idea to engage and entertain audiences through first person narratives was the central driving force behind form and content of the main element of the exhibition, the video characters of historic migrants. Destination Tyneside drew on the museum collection to exhibit objects belonging to migrants or their descendants, photos of their places of work, as well as displaying contextual information based on academic accounts (such as quotes by academics such as Dave Renton). BAM! was mainly driven by the desire to record women's past and present experiences and the needs of the project participants. It aimed to develop knowledge about women's past and present lives, and, by doing this, provide support to Black and minority women. For BAM!, official records were considered cautiously, as there was little official documentation of Black and minority women by public institutions (BAM! Sistahood!, July 2015, p.5), and what existed was seen as presenting a 'reductive view of BAMER women's lives' (BAM! Sistahood!, 2015, p. 1). The academic histories were mainly driven by the individual historians' commitments and aims.

Many academics chose to mainly draw on official documentary evidence. Academics tended to give formal accounts of migration and minority groups, through the study of national and local policy, civic organisations and campaigns. Renton's, Lawless', and Copsey's research all examined civic and public responses to migration, antisemitic organisations, the role of unions, and public responses to anti-racist campaigns (2007; 1995; 2002). Hackett's account investigated state and local policies' role in supporting migrant communities (2009). Lawless' intricate account of the Arabs in South Shields drew heavily on official records and newspaper accounts, resulting in several chapters on hostility, and experiences of violence covered in large parts of each chapter (1995). While cultural or ethnic organisations' records served as sources to understand formal collective identity-making of migrants (Burnett, 2007; Lawless, 1995), most other academic accounts examined more formal or problematic aspects of migrants' and minorities' lives. The knowledge made from these mirrored Taylor's observation about the difficulty of writing about migrants' *experiences* based on traditional and official documentation (2010). The academic accounts can be seen as examples of what Kushner terms a 'pathological approach to the minority experience' (Kushner, 2001, p. 81), with its strong focus on conflict in every theme covered.

History-makers from each perspective found ways of acting on the gaps posed by official historic documentation. BAM!'s response to the biased nature of the official record was the creation and use of *new* sources to tell histories. Its practices emphasised experiential evidence of personal collections and interviews. BAM! used much of its time and financial resources on the development and creation of these sources, such as through photography, art, and oral history recording. The academic and museum perspective too explored ways of approaching more diverse topics. Tabili's creative response to the gaps in the historic record drew on of the analysis of a complete sampling of the foreign-born population in of South Shields across seven censuses (Tabili, 2011) as well as an intricate analysis of naturalisation applications. Lawless, as well as interviewing Arab boarding house masters and their families, let Arab seamen speak through their letters to the newspaper (1995). Dave Renton interviewed activists and migrants to provide a 'corrective voice' to official documentation (2007, p. 15f). Destination Tyneside attempted to give voice and tell experiential stories, based on their museum collections. The Destination Tyneside video characters gave a close view on the – imagined – experiences of historical migrants to Tyneside. The curation team also developed their collection through oral histories with current migrants and the son of a migrant.

The investigation of these histories showed how testimonial evidence, as well as new approaches to documents, complemented formal documentary analyses employed by many academics, and the Destination Tyneside video characters. For example, these video characters, built from limited source material, depicted identities as innate and

static, rather than as subject to change. The accounts also blended collective and personal identity. The BAM! accounts, on the other hand, provided a first-person perspective of women's experiences and actions concerning their culture and identities, and the personal meaning of these. The BAM! cooking demonstration, the setup of cultural organisations, as well as several objects in museum exhibitions demonstrated family and community contexts that facilitated women's changing relationship to their culture, heritage and identities. The oral histories in the Destination Tyneside gallery provided insights into migrants' feelings of arrival and changing definitions of 'home' and belonging. The BAM! representations expressed contestations and diversity within groups, such as when, in a film, Umme explained the use of the term 'Black' to 'define what we are', though she also admitted that 'some people are not comfortable with the term.' (Founders, 2016). The BAM! accounts were based on women's experiences and made knowledge claims through this proximity. Tabili's interpretation of documentary sources enabled a type of historical self-representation, as many of the sources she drew on were in migrants' own voices. She, however, problematised the way official naturalisation forms prescribed applicants' expressions (2011, p. 126) and thus showed the identities and characters that emerged from the record as temporary and based on specific situations. Accounts based on lived experience and on historic migrants' own voices, widened the focus and depth of interpretation. This showed how participatory accounts added new perspectives and expertise on personal experiences as well as on societal processes (Onciul, 2013, p. 93; Pente *et al.*, 2015).

In this history-making, partly based on new sources, hierarchies still existed. There was a clear prioritising of written documentation over testimonial evidence in academic accounts and exhibiting, and only BAM! favoured testimonial evidence. While both Renton's, as well as Lawless' works were partly based on interviews, the majority of their accounts were nevertheless based on documentary sources. Lawless, for example, did not let interviewed members of the 'Arab community' speak in his text (1995), and Renton's interviewees come to voice dispersed throughout the book only anecdotally (2007). Most other academics mainly claimed knowledge of the past by drawing on archival sources. In Destination Tyneside, the quality of visual presentations showed that contemporary testimonies were valued less than collection-based material. The videos based on testimonies were audio-visually lacking, and were not displayed prominently in the exhibition, while the historic video figures were the dominant and most impressive element of the display. By neglecting the substantial development of new sources, biased records were only contested in limited ways. In the majority of academic and the museum perspective examined here, trust was only marginally extended to testimonial evidence, perpetuating methods fraught with problems for knowing about past migrants and marginalised groups (Kushner, 2001).

While each method involved the mediation and curation of information, such as through the asking of specific questions in oral history interviews, or the interpretation of sources, such as the census material, not all were transparent about this process of making history. By foregrounding process and the production and interpretation of new sources, BAM! emphasised the making of knowledge and acknowledged the incomplete nature of accounts. Academic historians, on the other hand, in most cases (apart from Lawless' interviewees) followed the accepted academic principle of transparency, diligently referencing the sources their accounts were based on. In Destination Tyneside, the curators manufactured voice through the historical video characters. Destination Tyneside was not transparent in its use of evidence in the making of knowledge about past migrants – the video figures, but relied on its authority in claiming informed representations. The authority of these accounts relied on the museum as societal historical experts in legitimising this knowledge (Spivak, 1997; Collins, 1991; Naidoo, 2016). The intransparent use of evidence hindered critical examination of the way historical knowledge was produced and constituted. Transparency has been argued by academic historians to be a central aspect of history-making, since it enables contestation and debate (Jay, 1992; Arnold, 2000; Appleby, Hunt, Jacob, 1994). Scholars have investigated the role of the museum in authorising versions of the past (Gouriévidis 2014), but also proposed that museums could focus on the process of history-making (Kidd, 2014), to highlight contestation and the political nature of knowledge-making about the past.

Many documentary sources, employed by academics and the museum, revealed larger-scale issues of policy and organisations, while testimonial sources employed by BAM! and the museum's oral histories, showed the navigation and experience of migration and culture, as well as the meaning of these experiences. The methods of self-representation as well as the representational strategies employed by the museum were responses to problems central to the making of historical knowledge – that is, the way patterns of evidence prescribe content. Responses to this evidence relied considerably on researchers' decisions and priorities. These findings draw attention to the limitations of accepted normalised processes and methods to knowledge-making about the past, while also showing alternative methods of history-making. The acceptance of 'business as usual' and the denial of a development of critical approaches has been argued to sustain research that is unwittingly 'implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, gender, and oppression' (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005, p. 304). Without contesting the importance of debate, evidence and methodology, the making of history was shown here as an active process reliant on historically constituted documentation and individuals' investigations of these sources, and their aims and priorities in these practices.

### 6.3. Issues of common concern

The knowledge of migration and minority groups was considered to matter for all of society in all three perspectives. How issues were presented as of public concern was however different in each case. While John Tosh claims universal and public importance for academic historical understanding, and merely personal importance for cultural belonging (2008), this belonging is widely investigated in the literature as a major societal and political issue (Smith, 2006; Ashley, 2016; Hall, 2005). Some examine minority groups' cultural expressions and remembrances in public as making claims about their status in society (Ashley, 2016). Others have conceptualised societies' attitudes towards cultural diversity, focusing on relations with the past in terms of group ownership of the past (Ashworth *et al*, 2007), without treating knowledge of these pasts as of wider or shared concern. How academic, museum and bottom-up perspectives conceptualise publicness, therefore, can help understand which and whose knowledge about the past matters for everyone in society.

While the academic histories concentrated on exploring larger scale and structural issues, Destination Tyneside offered a first-person view on historical experiences presented as mainly private, and the BAM! perspective connected larger societal issues with personal experiences. Often, an entanglement with structures signalled an understanding of issues as of wider importance and connected to common societal concerns.

The academic accounts mainly presented issues related to traditional public themes. Their focus on larger trends and structural issues in their histories included themes such as housing, work, and policies. This was for example the case in Lawless' research on the Arab community of South Shields, which studied housing developments as well as work arrangements and union disputes (1995). Jenkinson's and Byrne's research on labour relations and union disputes in the early twentieth century (1993; 1977), Hackett's research about national and regional policies (2009), Renton's focus on the role of the council and labour organisations in responding to migration and integration (2007) all covered larger-scale issues. Academics operated mainly within traditional definitions of what matters should be of public concern, interested mainly in historical knowledge connected to structural questions, policy, labour relations, and formal organisations (Tosh, 2014).

The bottom-up account, as well as one of the academic histories, contested traditional understandings of the publicness of historical knowledge. Personal experiences and actions were approached by BAM! participants, as well as Tabili's academic account, as based *within* society and institutions – their actions presented as part of a wider network of decisions and structures and thus as of concern for all of society. In BAM! accounts, for

example, personal experiences of exclusion were linked to larger societal and institutional trends in their stories about establishing Black women's centres against the backdrop of institutional racism. In the BAM! content, themes of identity, family and activism all took personal approaches, that provided insights into wider issues. Identity and family issues were sometimes considered distinctly political; such as cultural practices that negatively affected women, and domestic violence. Community and personal political activism in BAM! oral histories were shown as responses to and in dialogue with the neglect of these issues by public institutions. Tabili's histories detailed the making of personal and local identity as emerging through inter-cultural social relations as well as affected by formal policies. Her research for example highlighted the wider social implications of private issues such as marriage, by discussing the role of South Shields-born women as gatekeepers into local society. Contemporary oral histories in the Destination Tyneside exhibition presented the impact of geopolitical events on personal choices, such as Shirin's account of adopting Western clothing when Islamophobia increased after the 9/11 attacks. The contemporary Destination Tyneside characters also showed the insecurity and complexity of identity categories. Some interviews in Destination Tyneside and BAM! depicted identity as difficult and a struggle, which was affected by power relations, as Collins argues: 'groups unequal in power are correspondingly unequal in their ability to make their standpoint known to themselves and others' (Collins, 1991, p. 26), showing how the specific societal context makes personal experiences and identities into political issues. These examples allowed issues traditionally thought of as personal or private to be understood as shared problems. In Liddington's terms, this makes a connection between personal and wider concerns, and can thus be described as public history (Liddington, 2002). By showing experiences and relationships as constrained by historical structures and processes (Scott, 1999, p. 42), they highlighted a range of issues not commonly debated as 'public', nevertheless as 'of common concern'. These presentations thus contributed to the negotiation of definitions of publicness (Fraser, 1992), widening the understanding of the political and the public (Lister, 1997). This affirms feminist theorists who state the public relevance of issues deemed private in traditional accounts (Okin, 1991; Lister, 1997).

However, not all accounts explicitly made these links between personal and public, and indeed some presented those same issues as distinctly private. BAM! activities such as the cooking demonstration made no explicit claim on specific public importance, and were social and entertainment-oriented in nature. The Destination Tyneside exhibit's main element, the video characters, individualised migrant histories as separated from wider societal forces in two ways. First, actions and experiences narrated by the characters were shown as individual choices with many of the historic migrants stating decisions related to their own culture, not influenced by wider social, political, economic or cultural



contexts. For example, their decisions and desires were about being 'worried we would lose our Italian way of life' (Angela), concern for a place where 'children can be schooled according to our traditions' (Lena) or 'feel at home, ... free to pray according to our custom, talk our mother language and eat our traditional food' (Ali). The actors' differences were depicted as based on their individual choices, rather than also impacted by structural differentiation – by axes of power that shape individuals' location within a society and impact on their experiences (Mirza, 1997; Crenshaw, 1991; Scott, 1999). The museum de-politicised these issues of 'difference', veiling the social power relations that BAM! participants and the contemporary museum interviewees highlighted in their oral histories. It even presented themes such as work through a focus on personal experiences, privatising and individualising the content rather than connecting it to wider or structural issues (Baur, 2006, p.132).

Secondly, by focusing on personal and cultural choices, the Destination Tyneside narratives did not investigate social and political processes of migration and integration, presenting larger society and fellow citizens as not involved. This eschewed a discussion of how the personal migrants' and their groups' stories related to wider society in Tyneside – what Brown has discussed as the relationality of history: 'the fact that these histories exist simultaneously, in dialogue with each other' (2006, p. 303). This depiction did not make migrants' and minority groups' experiences a *shared* issue, rather separating them from mainstream society, as opposed to the BAM! narratives that mentioned societal contexts for community networks, such as exclusionary practices by public services, and the academic account that presented cultural and ethnic organisations' role in integration (Burnett, 2007). While the Destination Tyneside narratives were presented in a public space, they did not make claims for their personal experience to be in any way specifically common concerns, thereby *at the same time* affirming the traditional divide between public and private, that considers identity and difference to be part of the private realm (Young, 2000).

While several parts of the BAM! approach aimed to transform traditional understandings of what matters should be of public concern, the majority of museum and academic perspectives did not make explicit challenges to traditional understandings that excluded issues of difference and identity. The museum's neglect to explicitly connect personal and cultural issues to public concerns led to BAM! being burdened with the contestation of the boundaries of what issues were important to all members of the public. This led to conflicts within the public sphere during the research. For example, one museum outreach staff could not understand the ideas of BAM! volunteers, who were repeatedly asked to explain why 'difference', rather than common humanity, should be an important aspect of museum displays. These conflicts were rooted in inequality and differing understandings of what counted as a public matter, with expressions of difference being interpreted as

'identity politics', rather than as expressions of situated participants in debates about shared matters (Young, 2000). It is this context that initially led to the inception of the BAM! project, as a type of 'counter public' (BAM 1, 2016; Fraser, 1992, p. 124). The BAM! women constantly struggled to be heard in public, and to affirm the public import of the perspectives on historical knowledge they deemed valuable for all.

My study has shown that in relation to publicness, knowledge-makers operate with different understandings of what issues count as of public concern. These diverging understandings can lead to conflict in the public sphere. As public institutions, museums have a mandate to improve shared understandings of publicness and ideas about the past that affect members of society, as well as to facilitate access to the public sphere in terms of individuals' and groups' situatedness (Young, 2000).

#### **6.4. History-making, structural inequality and change**

A comparison of the effects of historical knowledge-making illustrates that this process is not confined to questions about the past. What happened in the past and how we know about this, is relevant to understanding and behaviour in the present and in society. The value of the past for the present in these practices is contested and indeed strongly influenced by power relations (Smith, 2006; 2012; Crooke, 2010; Ashley, 2014). Several scholars have argued that positive representations of the past have damaging effects on understanding the present, for example when they celebrate diversity in past and present without acknowledging socio-economic inequality or exclude discussions of 'race' and racism (Littler, 2005; Naidoo, 2005; Trofanenko, 2016; Johansson and Hintermann, 2010; Myers, 2006). Accounts can bring the past near as a challenge, but they can also place distance between the present and past events (Phillips, 2004). The effect can be reassuring or in turn challenging to present structures (Johnson, 2012). These representations of the past create different understandings as to the urgency of the need for change and who has a role in it, bringing this discussion back to the first part of the chapter, where interviewees of all three perspectives mentioned ideas about the role of history in effecting change.

The three perspectives contributed, to varying degrees, to society's understanding of an unequal present, shaped by a range of intersecting structures. Academics, while their histories described racist incidents in depth, remained superficial and often uncritical in their analysis of racism, for example. In some academic accounts of civic and public responses to migration, including xenophobia, racism and antisemitism, racism was presented as morally and politically distant from the author and the reader (Copsey, 2002; Lawless, 1995; Renton, 2007). These representations in some of the academic literature help to see the *wrong* of racism, and position the reader as distant from this wrong

(Johnson, 2012). This type of historic account acts to strengthen readers' and visitors' own identity and confidence, as someone who has nothing to do with racism or antisemitism (Lawson, 2003). The museum display Destination Tyneside acted to confirm the *status quo*, through its portrayal of a harmonious society, free of tensions, and not requiring that audiences take action or change. This display of individuals freely pursuing their cultural expressions as they pleased, was similar to the 'plaster effect of multiculturalism', discussed by Littler (2008), which acts through such representations to veil deeper structural inequalities and racism. Presented by those in positions of privilege, this complacency within museums and by academics is problematic, as it leads to the maintenance of privilege within an hierarchical society. The effect of such accounts on the present is the upholding of present structures, since they do not facilitate a diagnosis of present problems.

Other accounts offered analytical tools to bring about change. Aspects of the BAM! project and Tabili's histories, on the other hand, fostered an understanding of hostility and racism that was based on the existence of historical structures and contexts. Understanding the occurrence of racism as having effects for the present was also very urgently stated by Tabili in her interview: 'We could dismantle those structures that made racism ... – beneficial to some people, and harmful to others, ... and we ought to.' (Historian 1, 2016). Her academic analyses were intended to help this dismantling. In Tabili's work, processes like policing and changes in migration legislation, such as the Aliens Act 1905 and the Aliens Restriction Act 1914, but also the labour market and industrial leaders and associations (Tabili, 2011, p. 67) were put forward as having a role in the integration or disintegration of migrants in the town. Renton and Hackett, although implicitly, showed how regional policies and union organisation could decrease or increase local hostility and integration (2007; 2009). Since Renton argued that union organisation and anti-racist campaigning were instrumental in fighting racism, he implicitly advocated for the potential of these methods in the present. This fostered an understanding of state and regional policies, work and industrial actors, as impacting on people's positive or negative relationships in a society, and the occurrence or absence of hostility against newcomers or groups considered 'different'. While experiences by migrants themselves, in BAM! and the museum oral histories, were important reminders that these were not framed solely by racism and hostility, accounts of racism based on personal experience, however, often clarified the importance of exploring wider structures of racism. These analytical tools can aid the *diagnosing* and *understanding* of racism in society, central to the formulation of practical strategies.

The bottom-up perspective specifically argued for an understanding of *knowledge-making about the past* as deeply involved in societal structures of racism and sexism. In all three perspectives the making of history was mixed with ideas about 'value'. Destination

Tyneside saw historical knowledge on migration as a tool to 'alter perceptions on immigration' (Little, 2013), acknowledging the instrumental value of knowledge – that of changing views and attitudes. BAM! and two academic interviewees mentioned knowledge as holding intrinsic value. BAM! saw the importance of knowledge about the past – history – as deeply connected with the *importance* and the *value* of Black and minority ethnic women themselves. Inaccurate knowledge and devalorisation thus came together, as expressed in one interview that unless children learn all types of history, they 'may feel undervalued' (BAM 3, 2016) and by the BAM! facilitator that 'if you think, "ooh, only some people are capable of doing anything of worth," then you're not gonna ... value other people as much' (BAM 2, 2016). Academic publications did not mention the value of historical knowledge, but academic interviewees did, for example when one historian stated about his research subjects, Black Germans in the past, that 'These people were important.' (Historian 2, 2016). Historian 1 specifically linked academic neglect to under-valorisation 'I feel so strongly that certain things have been neglected in the academy. And voices (...) that haven't been heard, and I think immigrants just haven't been heard at all, they've been overlooked, maligned' (2016). These statements saw the lack of historical research in these pasts as affirming *importance*, meaning that if something was not researched, this resulted in it not being valued, or conversely that it was not researched because it was not considered important enough. In all cases, facts were thus linked to value, whether explicitly or implicitly (Code, 1998), enabling an understanding of all three perspectives on knowledge-making, including academic research, as 'acts of value' (Ashley, 2016). *Knowledge* of and research into specific pasts can thus be considered as a *valorisation* of these pasts (Ashley, 2014; 2016; Smith, Waterton, 2009, p. 292).

The knowledge-making itself played a role in contesting societal structures, or 'patterns of cultural value' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p.29). Laura Tabili's *Global Migrants Local Culture* contested previous omissions in historical writing, which contributed to an insular portrayal of British history. Her research itself, as well as the BAM! project and the content they produced, were intended to be structural challenges to this insular and exclusionary portrayal, which denied roles of importance to migrants and migrant women. This exclusionary portrayal was understood to contribute to present societal problems. Tabili and BAM! offered contestations that brought the focus of historical omissions into the present, by asking questions about how cultural inclusion and exclusion was fostered by historical knowledge-making. Tabili, for example, stated that 'The erasure of these historical migrations from scholarly and popular consciousness has exacerbated controversies over recent migration to Britain.' (Tabili, 2011, p. 2) Two BAM! facilitators explained the impact of knowledge structures, that is, a lack of knowledge of diverse people's contribution to historical developments, on a lack of social cohesion and a lack of

respect for certain groups. For instance, the BAM! coordinator asserted that 'it's about working towards a way of people living and being together' through more knowledge about diverse people's contributions (BAM 1, 2016). This emphasised a narrow perspective on what pasts matter as impacting on all of society, with racism and sexism grounded in a non-appreciation of historical contributions. The exclusionary nature of knowledge-making was seen to impact on all of society. Drawing on black feminist and postcolonial thinkers, the BAM! project identified racist and patriarchal structures as impacting on present-day knowledge-making (Collins, 1991; Spivak, 1997). This type of contestation of present structures focused on practices of knowledge-making about the past, highlighting how deeply connected structural and institutional settings are to the *content* of heritage and histories within society.

The urgency of change, and indeed practical steps towards it, was evident most strongly in the bottom-up perspective. One of the ways the perspective sought to contribute to change was in empowering women, by being able to draw on relevant historical traditions, such as feminist activism, and to value their own role as history-makers, in an understanding of knowledge as transformational, or as Linda Tuhiwai Smith states: 'To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form the basis of alternative ways of doing things' (Smith, 2012, p. 81). BAM's perspective presented a long-term view on the contestation of exclusionary practices. BAM! also aimed at structural transformation, specifically criticising larger ideological barriers of gender inequalities, racism and stereotypes as challenges to the representation of Black and minority women's heritage (BAM! Sistahood!, 2015). The coordinator explicitly considered the dismantling of racist structures as the responsibility of everyone in society, asking 'whose responsibility is it' (to change existing institutions and representations)? (BAM 1, 2016). While this included a transformation of valuation structures (Fraser, 2003, p. 29) – whose past is considered as important – it was also about changing who has a role in debating the value of diverse pasts. The argument 'against the exclusion of marginalised voices from systems of knowledge production and critical dialogues about that production' (Clarke and Lewis, 2016, p. 135) distinctly refers to participating in discussions about knowledge about the past.

Difference in priorities impacted on how the make-up of the participants in history and heritage-making was approached. While academic and museum history was developed by seasoned researchers, curators and board members who were part of established, white knowledge communities (see Early, 2016; Adi, 2014; Atkinson *et al*, 2018; Shaw, 2013), BAM!'s work questioned the make-up of these institutions and aimed to bring about change. In academic and the museum history-making, priorities went into the creation of *products* – writing books and creating the exhibition. The museum prioritised the history-

making within fixed display development, with only limited funding for interactive and participatory outreach programmes. The creation of products was done with an acceptance of the *status quo* in history and heritage infrastructures, with academics and the museum relying on existing structural and financial support and contributions. Academic history was largely conducted by professional individual researchers, who developed their research with assistance from other individuals in research and archive institutions. Most of those members of university, archive and funding bodies were trained historical experts and part of an existing infrastructure. The museum display too operated within an existing institutional power hierarchy. It was developed within the institution, with archivist and collections experts, as well as academic historians. Destination Tyneside was developed by the museum's curating team, with decisions about the exhibition form, specifically the video characters, heavily influenced by management and board members. Outreach colleagues and community partners contributed to the display in a limited way. BAM's approach on the other hand aimed to bring about change in the existing infrastructure by involving new people in the making of heritage. It stressed the importance of grassroots and community ownership. It too had a few key players – coordinators, facilitators and volunteers. Most of those who took part in the project however were new to history and heritage work, rather than experienced professionals. In interviews, some academics wanted to see change in academic institutions, to reflect more diverse voices and viewpoints. While BAM's practice advocated infrastructural change, academics and museum staff accepted the given order in their practices. In the academic and museum perspective, this led to exchange amongst a limited knowledge community (Code, 1998), that maintained boundaries between the authorised experts and outsiders (Watson and Waterton, 2010; Naidoo, 2005; Hall, 2005), showing that the museum and academics, in these cases, made a discretionary choice not to include more diverse agents in the creation of displays and making of knowledge about the past (Naidoo, 2005). The museum and academic accounts thus perpetuated knowledge inequalities by prioritising the production of tangible outcomes within the acceptance of present hierarchies. The bottom-up account on the other hand specifically dedicated resources to the challenging of those hierarchies and change the make-up of those who are in control of decisions about *knowledge* about and the *value* of the past.

Considering the importance academic history places on evidence and the academic community (Arnold, 2000; Appleby, Hunt, Jacob, 1994; Jordanova, 2006), the lack in diversity of knowledge-makers about the past is problematic. It results in a perpetuation of present academic and museum communities that comprise limited viewpoints. Debate is thus not as critical and diverse as is claimed. Challenging societal inequality thus is not merely about redistributing goods and granting recognition to those who are 'different' in authoritative cultural institutions, but about access to the decision-making, or 'democratic

equality' (Anderson, 1999). The continuing exclusion of certain groups in society from positions of power in institutions of knowledge-making – or the absence of actual democratisation of those institutions – thus contributes to the maintenance of cultural power and interpretive power over what pasts matter (Collins, 1991). This supports Nuti's theory of the continuation of historical injustices through the reproduction in the present and its institutions (2019), in this case in institutions of knowledge-making.

All three perspectives acknowledged, even if not centrally, the link between historical knowledge and value. Museums have long been identified as key actors in placing value on the past (Pearce, 1993; Smith, 2006), in authorising societal culture, history, and identity (Onciul, 2013, p. 81), whereas bottom-up heritage has been analysed as contesting these public valorisations to assert minorities' place within society (Ashley, 2016; Kenny, 2009). The examination and comparison of academic, museum and bottom-up perspectives here has shown that academic knowledge too is linked to valorisation of the past and implicated in the creation of societal 'patterns of cultural value' (Fraser, 2003, p. 29), which acknowledge actors and their experiences and actions as important – or unimportant. Who is involved in discussions and decisions about these questions is a matter of urgent common concern.

## Summary

This chapter has compared the insights from the three case studies, specifically in terms of their motivations, the making of histories, the publicness and wider effects of their knowledge-making. A central difference between two perspectives that emerged was a continuous and a distanced view on the past. This resulted in different understandings of historical change, with structural approaches on the one hand and personalised approaches on the other. The analysis of the position of the knower has shown that, while the three perspectives on the past offered different views as to whether or not they were part of the history they were researching, most used their engagement to take a critical and active stand in the present. The comparison of the three approaches has shown the differences in ontological stances in relation to knowledge-making between academics, museums and bottom-up approaches, showing that while academics and partly museum staff asserted their position outside of history, the bottom-up approach strongly asserted the rootedness of actors, and the importance of this situatedness *within* a historical tradition. A comparison of their practices – the making of knowledge about the past – analysed the knowledge created by the use of different types of sources, in terms of the way experiential and documentary sources provided insights into specific aspects of migration and minority groups' pasts, as well as how the limitations of documentary records were approached. These approaches were shown as dependent on researchers'

aims and priorities. Historical methodologies were employed here for different aims, sometimes political, while at other times the act of documentary research itself seemed to be the aim. The limitation of existing documentary research in giving voice to migrants themselves was stark, especially when considering the wealth of knowledge about women's experiences and actions created by the bottom-up account. Discussion of the publicness of the accounts showed the contrasting perceptions of what counted as issues of common concern, revealing that these differences in understanding led to contestation in the public sphere. The limited shared understanding within the museum of the public meaning of difference and identity was here a particularly conflictual site, burdening the bottom-up group with the countering claim to publicness. The final comparison of effects showed how accounts either solidified or challenged the *status quo* and thus perpetuated or challenged present inequalities and racism, with accounts varying in terms of their advocacy for change, and the urgency with which this change was seen to be needed. This has further shown the emphasis of the BAM! approach to change existing knowledge-making structures, while museums and academics relied on their maintenance. Differences in the practices led to academic and museum accounts being produced within a restricted as well as hierarchical and exclusive knowledge community. Structural approaches, chiefly within the bottom-up, but also the academic Tabili's work, were central in highlighting the knowledge created in the present as not neutral, but as implicated and functioning within historical power structures. Historical knowledge was considered here as playing a role in impacting on these structures. The majority of the academic, as well as the museum perspective, however, contributed to understandings of the past, and knowledge about it as 'history', as distant from the present, rather than structurally linked. This conceptualisation hinders a full appreciation of the workings of knowledge in the present and how patterns of valorisation constitute as well as contribute to inequality within society.



## **7. CONCLUSION**

### **7.1. Analysing three perspectives on knowledge-making**

This thesis aimed to answer why, how and for whom knowledge about the past is made in society, as well as how this knowledge functions in challenging or contributing to present inequalities. It investigated key actors in these processes: academics, museums and bottom-up organisations. Drawing on interviews, text and participant observation, this thesis provided a differentiated picture of three fields of knowledge-making. Researchers positioned themselves in relation to the knowledge-making process, with some emphasising distance, others continuity with the past. All three perspectives made some claims as to the public importance of knowledge about past migration and minority groups, but not all presented this strongly as of concern for all of society. While their views were similar in considering knowledge about the past as critical, and sometimes transformative, in the present, the specific effects on inequality in the present varied depending on the priorities of each perspective, with the bottom-up case's central concern being about the transformation of society.

This conclusion first provides an overview of what each chapter in the thesis has demonstrated. This is followed by a summary of how the research questions about knowledge-making about the past and its relationship to present inequality were answered. It then outlines practical implications of these findings and avenues for future research.

Chapter One, the introduction, specified the context, goals and need for this research. It offered arguments about how and whose historical perspectives matter, with some academic historians concerned about non-academics' identity-based engagements with the past and academic proclamations of the non-public nature of 'identity history' or heritage. An examination of the role of diverse knowledge about the past was considered as especially important in view of present hierarchies and the unrepresentative make-up of staff within authorised, and well-funded, institutions of knowledge-making. The chapter set out the critical qualitative methods employed to answer these questions, drawing on the reading of subjective and objective data, interviews and texts. The case study of the North East of England and more specifically Tyneside provided a localised area to study questions of migration histories and heritage, holding a host of examples of academic, museum and bottom-up knowledge-production.

Chapter Two, the literature review, examined the existing literature on the role and function of knowledge about the past in the present, analysing debates within academic

history, museum scholarship and heritage studies. The review diagnosed several gaps in the literature, which has not yet adequately examined the role of bottom-up approaches in making knowledge about the past. A deeper understanding of what each perspective – academic, museums and bottom-up – claimed to be of common or public concern was lacking, as well as investigation of knowledge-making in all three fields as active in contesting or confirming present hierarchies.

Chapter Three's analysis of interviews with academic historians and their motivations to pursue historical research showed that most of them upheld a distanced stance to the knowledge-making process but acknowledged the role of their personal background in making decisions about their research. Most of these historians did not consider themselves as part of history but discussed the importance of the past, or a connection with the past, *for others*. Several of the respondents also considered the past important in enabling critical perspectives on the present. An analysis of the main published academic histories about migrants and racialised groups in the North East of England, as well as several articles on this topic published in academic journals, demonstrated that the academics positioned their work in terms of factuality, aiming to present less biased knowledge of what happened in the past. Drawing on mainly documentary sources, these accounts covered the themes of housing, work, policies and identities, with racism a focus within each of these themes. Some academics acknowledged the limitations of the documentary evidence, resulting in attempts to either expand the sources used, or to use the material more creatively. While used by some, testimonial evidence was not accorded the same status as documentary sources. The knowledge produced by most of these researchers was largely considered by them as universally important, with only one historian examining issues not commonly considered as public matters and making explicit claims about their wider public relevance. The accounts, however, only had restricted reach, given their publication in exclusive academic outlets. The analysis of the histories' effects showed how treatment of racism could act to support and perpetuate current structures by externalising racist and antisemitic attitudes and actions. A few historical accounts partly enabled a diagnosis of racism in society and aided the analytical disruption of present hierarchies by considering racism in terms of its persistence and pervasiveness. The practices of this perspective were embedded in white institutions and funding bodies, a fact that perpetuated knowledge inequalities. Several interviewed academic historians acknowledged this as a problem.

Chapter Four presented and analysed data gathered from the migration gallery 'Destination Tyneside' in the regional Discovery Museum. The interviewed museum staff considered the past both in terms of their own connection with it, as well as more distanced. Interviews with a curator and three outreach staff showed that they considered the museum as a place for people's stories, while the curator also considered knowledge

of past migration as important in informing public debates. The exhibition's knowledge-making mainly relied on a mix of documentary evidence, imagination and testimonial evidence. The main element of the display relied on the curator to give voice to migrants from the past, a process complicated by limitations of the existing evidence. Several other parts of the display that approached the making of knowledge through oral histories, or presented knowledge in a more partial fragmentary way, remained on the fringes of the exhibition. The display evidently considered belonging and identities as public issues and aimed to include migrant experiences into the public story of Tyneside. Though in a public space, several elements of the exhibition at the same time discussed issues like cultural identity, and even work, as private concerns, rather than making claims about their public status. Thus, the display marginalised the specific histories through their representation as separate from wider society. The museum was positioned, in interviews and reports, as a public institution and a place for potentially difficult discussion about shared problems, while at the same time privatising the audience as customers. Knowledge about the past was intended to have positive effects on present society, but also perpetuated social inequalities by minimising their existence. The prioritising of the creation of the exhibition as a product, based on input from authorised history-makers relied on the maintenance of existing structures, thereby perpetuating exclusionary knowledge-making hierarchies.

Chapter Five presented data gathered from the grassroots project BAM! Sistahood!, used as the case study for the bottom-up perspective. Interviews with organisers and participants showed the importance they accorded to a connection with the past as fundamental to their personal identities, combined with the use of this connection as a basis for present action. The motivation for the project was also a response to wider societal neglect and mis-representation of Black and minority women's past. The making of knowledge prioritised testimonial accounts based on experience and meaning over documentary sources. This perspective created knowledge about issues of Black and minority women's identity negotiations, families and networks, as well as of activism. This knowledge about the past was at times not explicitly presented as of public concern, while in many cases, issues of identity and family were shown as connected to wider public matters. The exploration of activism was clearly put forward as speaking to public and political issues. The investigation of the way the knowledge about the past was presented as public or private also revealed barriers to accessing and speaking in public places. This perspective aimed at having a transformative effect, with cultural values and history-making contested as an arena where inequalities and injustice are perpetuated.

Knowledge about the past of Black and minority women was also considered as empowering Black and minority women in the present to consider themselves as change-makers. The project intended to challenge present hierarchies by transforming structures of whose past is valued and who decides about this question. In practice, this included the

provision of holistic support, skills development and training to those excluded from systems of knowledge production, as well as critical engagement with these systems.

The comparative analysis in Chapter Six showed that the main differences between the academic and the bottom-up perspectives were in motivations, sources and actors of history-making, and how issues were presented as public matters. Amongst all perspectives, there were two sets of motivations in articulating the importance of the past in the present. While a detached view, held by most academics and the museum curator, advocated the use of the past for distanced critical thinking, the continuous view, held by BAM! participants and staff, some museum staff, and one academic, emphasised knowledge of the past as connected to themselves and as fundamental in enabling action. The analysis also showed that each perspective had different aims in the making of knowledge about the past, leading them to different approaches to the use of sources. While academic accounts mainly relied on traditional documentary sources, BAM! developed new methods to counter exclusions of the historic record, and the museum used the traditional record to tell first-person accounts in their desire to engage visitors. The public nature of the knowledge produced in all perspectives was not defined by the specific content but rather the *presentation* of the content, with issues such as identity in some cases privatised and in others clearly declared as common concerns. Contesting definitions of publicness, such as how matters of 'difference' and belonging counted as public, led to conflict in the public sphere of the museum.

Naturalised hierarchies and the challenge to them also emerged as significant issues in knowledge-making, and led to differential valuations. While the museum display acted to maintain present hierarchies by negating their existence, some academic knowledge – the analysis of past operations and processes of racism – aided the identification of processes of present inequality and racism, even if not actively dismantling them. The bottom-up approach linked a diagnosis of racism with practical action and aimed to revalue neglected pasts through the project's knowledge-making. The comparison of the effects in each perspective's practices showed that the academics' and museum's prioritising of products served to uphold the status quo, while the bottom-up focus on process and training served as a challenge to the existing hierarchies in knowledge-making. The acknowledgement in all three perspectives of the making of knowledge as connected to value, underline the importance of BAM!'s actions in challenging the hierarchies that assert and decide about these societal values.

## **7.2. Original contribution to knowledge**

In summary, this thesis has developed new knowledge in response to the original research questions:

1. How and for whom do the three perspectives, academic historians, museums, and bottom up organisations, produce knowledge about the past?
2. How does each perspective on knowledge-making challenge or reproduce social inequalities?

In answering the first question, this thesis provided a differentiated understanding of processes of knowledge-making in the three perspectives. My research has shown history and heritage discourses impacting on the way researchers conceptualised their own positioning in relation to the past. While several academic and museum researchers acknowledged the role of their personal pasts or background for their research, they at the same time upheld a detached epistemological framework that considered a connection with the past important to others, but not themselves. Perspectives' aims and priorities were analysed as central in approaching sources for the making of knowledge, highlighting the role of individuals and organisations in the interpretive process. Further, this research provided fresh evidence of bottom-up perspective's contribution to historical knowledge. This historical knowledge and understanding was shown as both personal and public, with perspectives based in lived experience providing a deeper understanding of the meaning of identities, traditions and culture, and of racism and inequality. Drawing on the past in the BAM! women's everyday lives was considered fundamental to understanding themselves as historical agents. It also showed how this knowledge about the past was considered as of public concern, rather than as personal or purely for one group in society.

In answering the second question, the comparative focus has allowed an analysis of *effects* on the present not only by bottom-up histories, but also academic and museum histories by, for example, enabling or disabling understanding of historical and present racism and thereby reproducing or challenging inequalities. This has shown academic histories as similarly implicated in societal structures, adding to limited research that has been undertaken in this area (Johnson, 2012). Academic history has asked questions about its use in society, but the practical role of every representation of the past is not often acknowledged (Tozzi, 2012). The research has demonstrated the connection between *knowledge* about the past and the *valorisation* of the past, as acknowledged by individuals in all three perspectives. The bottom-up project specifically highlighted the absence of this knowledge as devalorising Black and minority women's role in society.

The structural understanding put forward in the bottom-up perspective helped to include history- and knowledge-making in the analysis of inequality and racism in past and present. This expanded the understanding of inequality and racism, and showed the implication of knowledge-production in matters of equality and justice. While other scholars have investigated knowledge production as an arena of injustice (Fricker, 2007), the specific connection between knowledge-making about the past and present injustices

has only been highlighted by scholars outside of history and heritage traditions (Collins, 1991; Young, 1990). Complex and interconnected understandings of the exclusionary impact of knowledge-making have not found elaboration in these academic discourses – the marginalisation of this knowledge from the main disciplinary approaches has impoverished critical debate within academic history and heritage.

### **7.3. Implications for practice**

These results have several implications for how we think about the practices of historical knowledge-making in society.

I have argued that research into the past can be understood as a valorisation of these specific pasts. A more nuanced understanding of the role of knowledge about the past, where facts and research are value-laden, allows research decisions, for example, to be considered as conferring value and legitimacy on the subjects researched by authoritative and official accounts. The understanding of all knowledge-making about the past as implicated in valorisation is essential in more clearly defining the aims as well as the particularity of academic, museum and bottom-up approaches. The presentation of academic history as value-neutral allows for the discipline and its advocates to claim distinct and superior status vis-à-vis other perspectives, that are explicitly about value, and exclude these from the authorised channels of making knowledge about the past. This means that the processes of asserting the value of specific pasts also remains within these channels.

The idea that personal background and political convictions can be suspended to engage in history and heritage research has been found to be problematic, especially if it sustains present knowledge hierarchies. The importance of individual actors and their viewpoints and aims in the knowledge-making process have been highlighted. Failure to take seriously the connection between personal background and research involves an acceptance of institutional and societal frameworks that benefit those who are privileged by present hierarchies and who position their viewpoints as neutral and disinterested. An academic discourse that advocates a view from 'outside' of history serves to veil inequality while preventing more political debates about the make-up of the academy and museums. This leads to a disregard of just *how important* a diversity of views is to improve the representativeness of historical knowledge in academic and public life. Critical discourse about personal and political involvement can aid an appreciation of partial positions that acknowledge proximity or a specific connection with the past. The understanding of the role of personal background and the expertise that proximity to research brings, is especially important given the unrepresentative nature of decision-makers in history and heritage institutions.

An understanding of the implication of knowledge-making in current systems of structural inequality needs to bring about a radical commitment to the dismantling of these systems. Necessary changes to academic institutions and museum, as well as funding practices are needed to address the issues identified in this thesis. The most obvious practical implication is an urgent need for the staff of museum and academic institutions to diversify, with a change in the workforce, especially of those in positions of power, and central content-focused roles, such as research, collection and curation, in these institutions. Change in staffing would, as this research suggested, result in a change in research topics, as well as in perspectives on and interpretation of topics. A firm commitment through a reprioritisation of resources – of both money and time – could enable this diversification, by implementing the recommendations of various reports from organisations offering solutions (Atkinson *et al.*, 2018; Equality Challenge Unit, 2016). This would raise the quality of debate in academic and museum communities through contestation by new and varied viewpoints.

However, exclusion in historical culture and exclusion in knowledge institutions have a relationship that is mutually reinforcing. A diversification of knowledge-making is not simply achieved by changing the personnel make-up of authorised institutions. Time and money, and changes to governance structures, also need to be deployed into a culture change – bringing about revised understandings about what and whose knowledge matters, in the past and the present.

My research proposes that a widening of historical methodology and a critical reflection on epistemology is central in order for the discipline to meaningfully question the present. My analysis gives weight to the understanding of history-writing as political, regardless of whether the historian is explicit about the political nature of their work, or if they aim to be apolitical. Because history-writing is located within an unequal society and its power structures, knowledge production can never be unpolitical and distinct from this power. Academic work, therefore, should consider research choices within their present context, and reflect on their implications. These research choices also include how the making of knowledge itself is approached – what sources are used and trusted, whose voices are heard through use of these sources and what knowledge patterns the outputs contribute to. Openness and commitment to dialogue and also a willingness to change are fundamental in order to develop historical research that has relevance for a larger portion of society. A strict focus on individual research confined to existing archives and documentary sources, is not, as Kushner has proposed (2001), apt for this task.

An understanding of research and knowledge-making as situated and strongly impacted by aims and commitments of the knower could help to foster more collaborative work and exchange. Bottom-up approaches are formed in response to exclusionary systems. This research has demonstrated the expertise that marginalised perspectives bring, stemming

from experiences and interpretation of their social positions. Bottom-up approaches, specifically those representing topics largely excluded from the authorised discourses, need to be prioritised in funding. The National Lottery Heritage Fund, for example, provides funding to such endeavours, but memory and culture make up only a marginal part of their grants. More collaboration, for example, between AHRC-funded academics and Heritage Funded groups (which would partly eschew the problems of funding inequality in collaborations through only AHRC funding), based on reciprocal appreciation of the approach each bring, could increase understanding of the varied expertise knowledge-makers bring to an understanding of the relevance of the past. Through these combined efforts at more varied knowledge-making, structures of valuation must be challenged, and change of those who make decisions about who and what is valued could be brought about.

Change is also required in understandings of what histories are about all of us. A deeper understanding and appreciation of contestatory bottom-up perspectives – that what they say is not just about themselves and their own past, rather about all of society and our shared, but exclusionary past – too can lead to this knowledge impacting more widely on societal understanding of the past. This could entail a change in societal attitudes about whose knowledge is valuable and authoritative. Further, a redefinition, and indeed an open approach to the understanding of what issues count as of common concern, could help to assess the wider import of diverse knowledge about the past. While it is important to differentiate between engagements with the past that are personal and private and those that are public, it is equally important to understand how engagements put forward competing understandings of what counts as of common concern, and thus as of public interest. This open approach sees approaches to the past that are concerned with specific groups as relevant not only to those groups, but also as speaking to the position of those groups within wider society, and to how the structures that affect specific groups affect all of society.

A deeper public understanding of how we come to know about the past is also needed and could be enabled by public institutions. Public history as fostering public understanding of how the past becomes history has been proposed by Raphael Samuel and Hilda Kean (1994; 2010). My research supports the urgency to promote public dialogue about the existing structures that enable the making of histories, through the archiving of remains and documents and the interpretation of them through researchers, and the funding agencies that prioritise, and legitimate, specific issues and themes in these processes.

Recognising that things that happened in the past do not stay in the past has profound implications for present challenges: it involves a realisation of the deep consequences that our actions in the present have on the future. The fostering by history-makers of a more



complex public understanding of long-term structural connections between past, present and future could contribute to debates on responsibility: it could help create a sense of shared responsibility, as well as identify those actors who hold greater responsibility than others, due to the power they hold in society. This involves an understanding of personal responsibility not just as a private, but also as a political issue.

#### **7.4. Avenues for future research**

More research is required to determine how the bottom-up case study employed here compares with other cases, and if the BAM! project was unique or conforms to larger trends. While the feminist approach it took was clearly highly influential for this project, other critical and alternative perspectives – influenced by labour history or post-colonial theory, for example, and intersectional approaches – that challenge elitist history- and heritage-making, could easily hold similarly enlightening perspectives on and add complexity to the nature of historical knowledge. Future research also needs to clarify the precise and varied types of expertise that academics, museums, and bottom-up approaches bring to the making of knowledge about the past, with a more in-depth investigation of how both documentary research and experiential engagement can enlighten historic developments and impact on specific themes.

A study for the UK in the style of Rosenzweig and Thelen's *The Presence of the Past* (1998) could elucidate how members of the public come to know about the past, whose knowledge they trust and value and how they mediate official as well as unofficial historical knowledge in their lives, as well as how an interest in the past emerges. This could help shape better understanding of the role of diverse types of history-making within the public sphere as well as communication between them.

Further enquiry is also needed to understand more deeply the relationship between researchers and their research, including the personal, political and ethical considerations that lead to decisions about research topics. A study of the institutional structures in place to facilitate research, of universities' and funders' research priorities, and publishers' interests, could increase understanding of how both personal decisions and institutional and structural contexts contribute to shaping knowledge-making about the past. The understanding highlighted by the present thesis of knowledge-making as a process whereby research decisions directly impact on the knowledge that is available to society, requires a deeper analysis of the interests and considerations at play in these processes. This could also include a quantitative analysis of the historical research topics that receive funding and what this allocation of resources says about the values held in society.

Research is also required to into the practical and political effects of knowledge, specifically about the past, as well as more generally. Knowledge about the past has been argued to have social effects, but the specific nature of these effects needs to be explored further, and could engage in exchange with specialists in education and psychology. This would entail investigating how knowledge and the availability of evidence of diverse people's historical contributions changes attitudes. Research into what makes knowledge effective in inspiring action and especially how it contributes to making problems become considered as urgent, would help provide answers to ongoing problems of global inequality and climate inaction. This could entail approaches to understanding how political and ethical convictions match actions and how cognitive dissonance is overcome, not just on a personal, but on a societal level.

## **Appendix A. Sample questionnaires**

### **Questions for Museums professionals**

Tell me briefly about yourself. What is your professional (and personal, if relevant to your work) background?

Do you think it is important to know what happened in the past? Why and for whom? To family, community, in a country, in the world?

Is it important to you to know where you've come from and understand how your parents have grown up?

Who are the best people to research and represent the past in the present? Do museums and archives have a special role in safeguarding the past?

What do you think of other ways of doing history - academic history, TV programmes, community histories?

Tell me more about your work in this museum. What do you do and why do you do it? Who is it for – yourself, past, present or future generations?

How do you decide what subjects should be researched/represented?

How do you choose who to work with and which communities to engage with?

What stories do you choose to tell, what stories do you not want to promote?

## **Questions for Academics**

Tell me briefly about yourself and how you became a historian.

How do you decide what subjects you research?

Do political, social or personal beliefs or convictions play a role in your history research?

Is it important to you to know where you've come from and understand how your parents have grown up?

What is the role of the historian?

Do historians have a role to play in society?

How would you define 'history', 'public history' and 'heritage'?

Why and for whom is it important to know what happened in the past?

Who are the best people to research and represent the past in the present?

## Questions for BAM! Sistahood project participants and volunteers

Tell me briefly about yourself.

Do you like going to the museum?

How else do you find out about the past? *Exhibitions, films, books, relatives, friends?*

Do you think it is important to know what happened in the past? *To your family, your community, in your country, in the world?*

Is it important to you to know where you've come from and understand how your parents have grown up?

What do you want to pass on to present and future generations (your children)?  
*Traditions, cooking styles, style of dress, morals, religion?*

What should children learn about the past in school (and in museums)?

Tell me about your involvement in the BAM! Sistahood project.

What do you do and why do you do it?

Are there any stories that you find particularly important to share? Are there things that should not be talked about, or less than others?

Who is it for – yourself, present or future generations? The BME community? All women? Everyone in the North East?

## **Questions for BAM! Sistahood coordinators**

Tell me briefly about yourself and what you do in this organisation, and your role in the project. What is your professional (and personal, if relevant to the project) background?

Do you think it is important to know what happened in the past? Why and for whom? To your family, your community, in your country, in the world?

Is it important to you to know where you've come from and understand how your parents have grown up?

Who are the best people to research and represent the past in the present? Do community organisations have a special role in safeguarding the past?

What message do you want to pass on to present and future generations? What should people learn about the past in public displays (school, museums, monuments)?

Tell me about your work on this project. What do you do and why do you do it?

Who is it for – yourself, past, present or future generations?

How do you decide what themes should be researched/recorded/represented?

What stories do you choose to tell, what stories do you not want to promote?

Do you ever choose controversial topics?

Any favourite public history you have done you could tell me about? Describe why?

## Appendix B. Information sheet and consent form



THE HERITAGE  
CONSORTIUM



### INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

#### History and Heritage in Tyneside

We would like to invite you to participate in a research project. We are interviewing a range of people about their involvement in academic history, public history and heritage projects. We will ask what is important to you about regional history, identity and heritage. We hope to shed light on the value and meaning of the past for present residents of Tyneside and the wider UK.

The interviews will be conducted in a place convenient to you between April and December 2016, and will take up to an hour of your time. We will arrange a convenient time with you by email or telephone.

If you agree to be interviewed, we need your consent, and have attached our participant form. We would be very grateful if we could record our interview to ensure the accuracy of our research. Should you wish to withdraw at any time we shall stop recording, or stop interviewing.

Please read the attached information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. If you would like to be updated about our research in future, please write this on the consent form. You can contact me or my university at any time for further advice and information. This research project has obtained ethics approval from the Northumbria University Ethics Board.

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THE HERITAGE  
CONSORTIUM



## **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and listened to a personal explanation about the research.

### **History and Heritage in Tyneside**

Thank you for taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time. If you decide within one month of the interview that you would like to remove the information you have provided, please contact us.

**Please tick or initial, if  
you agree**

- I understand that if I decide that I no longer wish to participate in this project and for my data to be used, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason, if this is before any publication has taken place. ☐
- I consent to the use of, and quotation from, the interview for publications and conference papers. ☐
- I wish to remain anonymous if the interview/personal papers are written about in publications. ☐
- I consent to the audio recording of the interview. ☐
- I consent to the taking of photographs for the following purposes (please circle those applicable): presentations at conferences, publications in academic or non-academic journals, academic online websites. ☐



**Participant's Statement:**

I \_\_\_\_\_

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

**Signed**

**Date**

**Investigator's Statement:**

I \_\_\_\_\_

Confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the participant.

**Signed**

**Date**

For information on Northumbria University Ethics Procedures please contact:  
Gill Drinkald  
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## **List of interviewees**

Historian 1, Laura Tabili, Professor of History, interview with author, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016, Sheffield.

Historian 2, Robbie Aitken, Lecturer in History, interview with author, 18<sup>th</sup> October 2016, Sheffield.

Historian 3, Natasha Vall, Professor of History, interview with author, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Middlesbrough.

Historian 4, Alison Twells, Reader in History, interview with author, 18<sup>th</sup> October 2016, Sheffield.

Historian 5, Paul Ward, Professor of History, interview with author, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016, Huddersfield.

Historian 6, Don MacRaild, Professor of History, interview with author, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2017, Coleraine.

Museum 1, Kylea Little, Curator, interview with author, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2016, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

Museum 2, Outreach staff, interview with author, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

Museum 3, Kathleen Boodhai, Outreach staff, interview with author, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016, Newcastle Upon Tyne

Museum 4, Michael McHugh, Outreach staff, interview with author, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

BAM 1, Coordinator, interview with author, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2016, Newcastle Upon Tyne

BAM 2, Tina Simbo, Facilitator, interview with author, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016, Newcastle Upon Tyne

BAM 3, Ruth, Volunteer, interview with author, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016, Newcastle Upon Tyne

BAM 4, Volunteer, interview with author, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016, Newcastle Upon Tyne

BAM 5, Asma, Volunteer, interview with author, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Newcastle Upon Tyne

Focus group 1, 4 BAM participants and volunteers, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Newcastle Upon Tyne

Focus group 2, 4 BAM participants and volunteers, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Newcastle Upon Tyne